

No 61.

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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

RISING IN THE WORLD;
OR, FROM FACTORY BOY TO MANAGER.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



Jack flung the noose over the thief's head, and it fell around his arm. Seizing the other end of the line, he pulled it taut, drawing Dean up to the screen a prisoner. "Help!" yelled the boy, and in rushed the crowd.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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Rising in The World

OR,

FROM FACTORY BOY TO MANAGER

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

HOW JACK CLYDE SAVES BERTHA GARLAND.

Bertha Garland, the prettiest working girl in Northbridge, was walking rapidly down the street toward the cotton mill when the seven o'clock whistle blew shrilly upon the balmy morning air.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed in a tone of great vexation as well as concern, "I shall be shut out. I know I shall. Isn't it too provoking for anything!"

Seeing quite a bunch of girls, the last in sight, entering the nearby gate at that moment, Bertha caught up her skirts and made a dash for the goal, in hope that by sheer good luck she might be able to get into the yard.

She was just a moment too late.

The gate slid across the opening almost in her face and left her on the wrong side.

"Oh, Mr. Dean!" she cried loudly, pounding on the gate. "Won't you please let me in?"

Morris Dean, a sallow-complexioned young man of nineteen, whose incipient moustache was a standing joke with the girls of the Northbridge Cotton Mill, officiated as time-keeper.

He had made himself very unpopular with the hands by his promptness in shutting the gate the first toot of the whistle.

Furthermore, it was his habit to glance up and down the street at the moment the whistle blew when his time-sheet noted an absentee, and if he saw the delinquent approaching

he would hold the gate open until the tardy one was almost up to it, and then suddenly close it in her face with a chuckle of delight.

Then he would peek through a hole at the dismayed one on the outside, and rub his hands in great glee.

This morning he noted the fact that Bertha Garland had not arrived when the whistle blew.

He was a bit surprised at this for she was usually one of the early birds.

When the bevy of girls who arrived at the last minute had filed into the yard, he looked out and saw Bertha coming hot foot for the gate.

With a grin he pulled the gate shut and fastened it.

But he did not actually intend to keep the pretty mill hand out.

Had it been any other girl he would have been deaf to her entreaties; but it was different with Bertha.

Morris was sweet on Miss Garland, and tried in every way to make himself solid with her.

In the present case he saw a chance to do her a favor, for it was the rule of the establishment that once the gate was shut it must not be opened again to admit a late comer.

So when Bertha rapped on the gate and made the appeal Morris was looking for, he answered through his peep hole:

"Is that really you, Miss Bertha?"

"Yes, yes," she cried eagerly. "It's really me. You'll let me in, won't you?"

"It's against the rules, Miss Bertha," he replied, as if hesitating.

"But I was right here when you shut the gate."

"Well, I'll let you in this time," he answered, opening the gate so she could pass through; "but I wouldn't do it for any one else."

"Aren't you good," she cried with a smile as she darted off toward the entrance door of the big brick building.

Morris rubbed his thin hands together with satisfaction as he watched the lovely fifteen-year-old miss skip gracefully across the yard.

"That's the only girl out of the bunch I'd put myself out for, and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for her. She's as sweet as a June rose, and as pretty as a picture. I've been itching to do her a favor, and now I hope she'll be grateful to me. I can't understand what she can see in that common factory boy—Jack Clyde—to be on such familiar terms with him, when she could associate with a gentleman like me. I could give her a swell time if she'd cotton to me, while Jack Clyde—bah! I hate him! All the girls says he's the best looking chap in Northbridge. He is I don't think. I'd like to know where I come in when I've got my good duds on. He doesn't make enough to afford a decent suit, the beggar! And what schooling has he had alongside of me? He has'n't even a decent common-school education, while I—I've been through the high school. Why he isn't in my class even a little bit, and yet he has the nerve to make up to the prettiest girl in the mill. He makes me sick."

Morris gathered up his time-sheet and walked into the office, where, as it was too early yet for the other clerks to appear, he spread the morning paper out on the top of his tall desk and began to read the sporting intelligence.

When Bertha Garland stepped into the elevator which would take her to the fourth floor where the loom she worked at stood in the midst of a forest of similar machines, she came face to face with Jack Clyde, who had a wicker basket full of fluffy cotton on his shoulder.

"Good morning, Jack," she said with a bright smile.

"Good morning, Bertha," he replied with a cheerful smile. "You're late. How did you manage to pass Morris Dean? You must have a pull with him."

"I guess not," she replied with a toss of the head, for she did not like the time-keeper a bit better than any other girl in the mill.

"Maybe you hypnotized him, for I notice he's never so happy as when he can shut out one or more of the girls in the morning," chuckled Jack.

Bertha laughed.

"Perhaps I did, for he actually opened the gate after he had closed it and let me in."

"Did he really?" he asked in some surprise. "It isn't like him to do that."

She nodded with a laughing look in her eyes.

"He said he wouldn't have done it for any one else."

"Then I guess Andy Blossom is right."

"About what?" she asked.

"He told me Morris Dean was dead gone on you."

"The idea!"

"I don't blame him. Aren't you the nicest girl in the mill?"

At that moment the elevator stopped at the fourth floor, and Bertha, flashing a saucy glance at Jack, sprang out and made for the dressing-room.

Jack got out, too, and carried his load to a certain part of the floor.

"You're late in getting to work, Bertha Garland," said one of the foremen sharply as the girl came to her loom, "I'll have to dock you fifteen minutes."

She made no reply but started her machine.

"Jobkins is cranky this morning," whispered the nearest girl to her.

"He's always cranky with me," replied Bertha, tossing her shapely head, disdainfully. "Some people are never happy unless they're finding fault."

The foreman's sharp ears caught the remark and he looked daggers at the pretty fair-haired girl, whom he disliked on account of her good looks and popularity.

There was another and more potent reason why he was down on her—he had tried to make love to her when she first came to the mill, and she had turned him down so hard that he had never forgiven her.

Jobkins, who was twenty-three, also hated Jack Clyde, because of Bertha's evident preference for him.

Whenever an opportunity occurred that he could annoy or find fault with the bright, industrious boy, he took full advantage of it.

He knew Jack depended on his job in the mill to support his widowed aunt and crippled sister, and it gave him a great deal of satisfaction to threaten the boy occasionally with discharge.

As Jack took care not to give him any real excuse to go to such an extreme, he was unable to gratify his spite to the extent he wished.

As Jobkins didn't confine his fault-finding and overbearing conduct to Bertha and Jack, he was not a bit more popular among the hands than was Morris Dean.

In fact of the two he was the most cordially detested.

The mill had a stack of orders on hand and was working at its full capacity.

Every floor was a busy hive of industry.

The music of the looms was continuous from seven to twelve and from one to six.

Jack and the other boys were kept on a steady hustle, and if any girl showed signs of weariness she soon heard from the foreman in charge of her section.

It was getting close to noon on the morning our story opened.

Jack was taking a drink of water from a cooler which stood on a low shelf at the end of the room where the big belt that furnished power to the main shaft came through an opening in the floor.

Suddenly the shrill scream of a girl rang through the room.

It was a cry that only comes from a human being in deadly peril.

For a second Jack's heart stood still, then, with the instinctive idea that one of the girls had been caught in the machinery, the boy sprang at the handle of the throw-off, which hung within a yard of the cooler, and controlled the power on that floor, and flung it over.

In a moment the main shaft ceased to revolve and every machine on the floor stopped.

A scene of intense excitement ensued.

Section foremen and boys were seen running toward a certain point, and Jack started in the same direction.

A girl was seen suspended by the hair from a countershaft, where she hung limp and senseless.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack, in horrified surprise, "it's Bertha Garland!"

It was indeed Bertha.

As she was returning to her loom from the dressing-room, a sudden draft of air coming through an open window had blown her long golden hair around one of the belts.

In a moment she was being drawn upward toward the countershaft.

She gave that one agonizing shriek and then fainted from the fright and pain.

But for Jack's prompt action in shutting off the power her entire scalp would have been torn off in a few seconds more.

Lucky indeed for her that he was at the cooler at that critical moment.

Ladders were brought, and the girl was seized and supported while the lacing of the belt connecting the countershaft with one of the branches of the main shaft was cut.

Then the counter-shaft was reversed until Bertha's hair was released.

She was lowered to the floor and given in charge of several of the women to bring her to consciousness.

The belt was then replaced and the machinery started again.

More than half of the girls were unable to resume work at once.

Several had fainted and were being revived, while the rest were so unnerved by the accident that many had become more or less hysterical, and had to be looked after.

Before the noon whistle sounded, however, it was known all over the floor that it was Jack Clyde who had saved Bertha Garland from a terrible disfigurement, if not death, and perhaps with the single exception of Jobkins there wasn't a person in the room but was ready to take off their hat to the bright boy who had given such a remarkable exhibition of presence of mind.

CHAPTER II.

THE DESERTED SHANTY.

"You're wanted in the girls' dressing-room, Jack," said Andy Blossom, Jack's particular friend, who worked on the same floor with him.

"What for?" asked Jack.

"Bertha Garland has come to and wants to see you."

Jack easily guessed what she wanted to see him for, but

though delighted that he had been able to render her so signal a service, he would have preferred to have had her postpone her protestations of gratitude.

But as he had been sent for he couldn't very well evade the interview, so he presented himself before her.

"Jack Clyde," she said, holding out her hand to him, "you saved my life and I sha'n't forget you as long as I live."

"Don't mention it, Bertha," he replied. "I'm glad I thought of doing the right thing at the right moment."

"You must take me home, Jack, as soon as the whistle blows. I couldn't do another bit of work to-day to save my life."

"I'll see you home with pleasure. How do you feel now?"

"My head is in a terrible shape. I feel as if every hair had been drawn out by the roots."

"I don't wonder. It's a good thing you're a lightweight, or you might have lost your scalp anyway. Why, when I saw you first you were hanging by your hair alone within a couple of inches of the countershaft. You had a narrow escape. It isn't so long ago that I read in the newspaper about a girl who had her scalp torn off by just such an accident in a Chicago glove factory."

"Oh!" shuddered Bertha. "Please don't talk about it any more. My nerves are all of a tingle. I shall have horrible dreams for a month. I know I shall."

As soon as the noon hour arrived there was a rush for hats on the part of the hands who went home for dinner, and a stream of employees was soon filing through the gate into the street.

Bertha was feeling a little better by that time, but she was glad to have Jack accompany her to her mother's humble cottage on the outskirts.

"I'll call around after supper and see how you are getting on," said the boy when he was leaving her at the gate of the little garden patch which lay between the street and the house.

"I shall be very glad to see you, Jack," she replied, giving him her hand. "I hope you understand that I am very, very grateful to you indeed. I shudder to think what might have happened to me had you not been near the throw-off, or had not acted as promptly as you did. Mother won't be able to thank you enough."

"Don't say any more, Bertha," replied Jack. "I'm glad I saved your hair, at any rate—it is too beautiful to be sacrificed. While I would have done the same for any one—in fact I shut off the power without knowing it was you who was in danger—I would sooner do you a service than any other girl in Northbridge."

"Thank you, Jack," she answered with a vivid blush.

Then the boy pressed her shapely hand and rushed off to his own home, a quarter of a mile away, to get his dinner, and return to the factory before the one o'clock whistle blew.

There were smiles without number for Jack that afternoon from every girl that he chanced to pass near.

Although he hadn't actually done an heroic action he was, nevertheless, voted a hero by the fair ones, most of whom envied Bertha Garland for having the inside track with the most popular boy in Northbridge.

There was one girl, Flora Watson by name, who hated Bertha for quite a different reason.

She was about the only mill hand who regarded Morris Dean in a favorable light.

Morris had taken a fancy to her at first and bestowed considerable attention on her, which she had accepted with great satisfaction, for she regarded young Dean as much superior in the social scale to Jack Clyde, or any of the common mill boys, as she considered them.

Morris, however, practically dropped her as soon as he got on speaking terms with Bertha Garland, and Miss Watson was not long in ferreting out the cause.

As a consequence she became desperately jealous of Bertha, imagining that the pretty mill hand was really setting her cap, as the saying is, at Morris, when the truth of the matter was Bertha thought more of Jack Clyde's little finger than the whole of Morris Dean's better dressed self.

Flora Watson was undoubtedly a good looking brunette, but her disposition was not in keeping with her face.

She was selfish, inclined to be haughty, though her circumstances did not justify the airs she put on, spiteful to a degree, and, when her jealousy was aroused, revengeful.

To what extent the latter controlled her this story will show.

Morris Dean was something of a sport.

He was seldom to be found at home of an evening, but any one who wanted to see him after he had finished his supper could nearly always depend on locating him at the Northbridge Billiard and Pool Parlors on Main Street.

Here he read the sporting papers, made small bets on baseball, and other events with the frequenters of the place, and flashed his money about as if he had plenty of it.

He was naturally fair prey for sharpers, and one of that genre succeeded in winning his confidence.

This individual's name was Nelson Spavinger.

He was a second-rate sport, dressed rather conspicuously, especially in the way of cheap but expansive jewelry, and insinuated broadly that he was one of the knowing ones.

As soon as he sized Morris up he cottoned to him at once, and young Dean was flattered by the preference he showed for his society.

It was the evening of the day on which the accident had happened to Bertha Garland.

Mr. Spavinger had gone to the Springfield races that day and had carried with him every cent of money that Morris Dean owned in the world, beside a small sum he had borrowed of the proprietor of the billiard parlors, to invest on certain sure tips which the sporty gentleman assured Morris he had acquired.

He had refused to enlighten the young man as to the horses he intended to back lest, as he said, Morris might inadvertently impart the knowledge to a third person.

He had, for reasons he best knew, arranged to meet young Dean at an old deserted shanty on the outskirts of the town instead of at the billiard parlors, and pay over to him his share of the winnings.

Morris ate his supper in a state of suppressed excitement and satisfaction at the enchanting prospect of receiving a considerable sum of cash that evening from his friend Nelson Spavinger.

He had cut from the evening paper a list of most of the winning horses at the Springfield race track, and the balance he had taken from the ticker at the billiard parlor on his way home.

As the cautious Mr. Spavinger had not supplied him with any data, he could not, of course, say for sure that the said winners were the horses on which the sporting gent had laid his money, but he entertained little doubt on that head, since he had every confidence in Mr. Spavinger's honesty and ability to pick a winner.

Therefore he lost no time in making his way after dark to the dilapidated shack where he expected to meet the knowing gentleman.

He carried an umbrella with him, for the sky had a threatening and watery look.

Before he got there it began to rain heavily, which made him fear that Mr. Spavinger might fail to keep the appointment.

About the time Morris left his home, Jack Clyde left his aunt's cottage en route for Bertha Garland's abode.

Jack also noted the unpropitious appearance of the sky, but not possessing an umbrella, or being afraid of a chance wetting, he kept on his way.

Before he got half way to his destination the rain commenced to fall.

It soon came down so fast that Jack looked around for shelter, and his eyes lighted on the ramshackle story-and-a-half building toward which Morris Dean was bending his steps.

The ancient door was partly ajar, and so Jack pushed his way inside and took his stand beside the window which afforded him a view of the wet and lonesome road.

As the rain let up to a drizzle and he began to think of resuming his walk, he noticed a young man coming along at a smart pace with an umbrella.

To Jack's surprise this person turned in at the broken down gate and came up to the building.

He did not immediately enter, but stood outside looking up and down the road with some evidence of impatience.

Jack recognized him at once as Morris Dean, and wondered what had brought him to that section of the town, so far from his customary haunts.

Presently another person came walking up the road.

To Jack's astonishment he, too, turned in at the gate and walked up to Morris.

This was Mr. Nelson Spavinger.

"He looks like a sport," thought Jack. "I wonder who he is? He seems to know Morris pretty well."

At that moment the rain resumed its heavy pattering on the roof.

"They're coming in here," breathed Jack. "I'll let them have this room all to themselves, as Morris Dean is no friend of mine, and I am not anxious to make the acquaintance of his companion."

So Jack quietly withdrew to the rear room, taking his seat on an empty candle box he found there, just in time to escape the notice of the newcomers, as they walked into the front apartment.

CHAPTER III.

NELSON SPAVINGER AND HIS DUPE.

"It's a disagreeable night, young gent," remarked Mr. Spavinger, as he led the way into the room. "I wouldn't have come out here only I didn't want to disappoint you. I make it a point always to keep my engagements."

"I don't see why we couldn't have come together in a private room at Bishop's Parlors just as well?" replied Morris. "It would have been much handier, and a good bit more comfortable."

"There are reasons, Master Dean, which I might explain if I cared to, why I preferred to come here. We will throw a light on the subject if you don't mind."

It was soon apparent that Mr. Spavinger was not unfamiliar with the interior of the old shanty, for he went to a closet, took out a box and placed it near the entrance to the room where Jack sat in the gloom, an unsuspected intruder.

Then he produced a whiskey bottle with a bit of candle stuck into its neck, and placed it on the box.

Striking a match he lit the candle, diffusing a dim and uncertain light around that end of the room.

Then he brought forth two smaller boxes, which he placed on either side of the large box.

"Be seated," he said to Morris, pointing at one of the impromptu chairs, and taking possession of the other himself; "we might as well make ourselves comfortable."

He took a cigar from his vest pocket and lit it at the candle.

From his hip pocket he next brought out a suspicious looking flat flask.

"You don't imbibe strong liquors, I believe," he said, unscrewing the metal cap and putting the mouth of the bottle to his lips. "It's very handy to have a pocket pistol like this," he grinned, "on a wet night. Takes the chill out of your blood."

"Well, Mr. Spavinger," said Morris, impatiently, not to say anxiously, "what luck today? I suppose you collared quite a tidy sum off the bookmakers."

Nelson Spavinger did not hurry himself to answer the question.

He calmly helped himself to as much of the spirits as he wanted and then laid the flask with some deliberation on the box beside the candle holder.

"I'm sorry to say, young gent," replied the turfy in-

dividual, "that things didn't pan out just the way I expected to see them do."

"What do you mean?" almost gasped Morris. "Didn't the horses you picked out win?"

"Not on your life they didn't. A screw worked loose somewhere in my calculations, and all our good money went to swell the bookmakers' profits."

Judging from Nelson Spavinger's voice and manner he was a good loser.

"Great Scott!" groaned Morris. "Didn't we win a thing?"

"Not a soumarkee."

"Then I'm ruined," answered Dean, dismally.

"Ruined!" echoed Mr. Spavinger cheerfully. "Rot."

"There's no rot about it. I gave you every cent I possessed, including fifteen dollars I borrowed from Mr. Bishop."

"What of it?"

"What of it? Why I'm busted, can't you see?"

"Well, so am I," replied Mr. Spavinger, as coolly as though such a thing was an everyday occurrence with him. "I'm not kicking. Better luck next time."

"But I won't be able to lay another bet for some time to come."

"Why not? You've got your wages coming, ain't you?"

"What's ten plunks when I've got to pay five of it into the house?"

"What's the matter with owing the five for awhile?" was Mr. Spavinger's cheerful answer.

"It won't do. My father would want to know what I was doing with my money that I couldn't pony up. If he got suspicious it would be all day with me at the Parlors."

"You don't mean it," said Mr. Spavinger somewhat incredulously, blowing a few rings of tobacco smoke into the air.

"I do mean it," replied Morris, with some energy.

"Well, I'm blowed."

"The first thing I've got to do is to stand off Mr. Bishop. I promised to return that money tonight, but now that's impossible. It will take all of a month for me to square myself with him, and I'll hardly have more than cigarette money left. I'm in a deuce of a hole. I've promised to take a girl to the show at the Opera House on Friday night, and now I haven't the price. I'll have to stand her off, too, and I don't know how I'm going to get around it, for she's a regular spitfire when she's mad. I've been trying to shake her for some time, because I'm making up to another one of the factory girls, but she won't be shook."

Mr. Spavinger didn't seem particularly interested in Dean's feminine affairs.

He took another drink and continued to smoke with one eye cocked meditatively at the ceiling.

"You make a lot of fuss over a capful of ill-wind," he remarked with a perceptible sneer.

"A capful!" cried Morris, almost angrily, "you mean an overwhelming blast—a hurricane that has completely wrecked me."

"Pooh!" said the sport, emitting a cloud of smoke from his mouth. "Can't you borrow fifty cases from your brother to square yourself?"

"My brother!" cried Morris.

"Sure. Didn't you tell me you had a brother who keeps a store on Main Street?"

"So I did; but he wouldn't give me a red," replied Dean, bitterly.

"He must be a funny kind of brother if he wouldn't," said Mr. Spavinger, looking keenly at his victim.

"He's a sneak," cried Morris, contracting his eyebrows wrathfully. "I hate him!"

"What for?"

"Because he's always talking to the old man about me. It's a wonder he doesn't spy on me at the Parlors, and spoil me there. If it wasn't he had to be at the store evenings I dare say he would."

"He's as bad as that, is he?"

"Yes, he is," responded Morris, angrily. "Because he's older than me, and is making money, the old man takes stock of everything he says. I believe there's nothing so bad he could say of me that the old man wouldn't believe."

"Well, now," said Nelson Spavinger, chucking the butt of his cigar on the floor and winking at his dupe in a significant way, "I don't know but there may be some advantage in that."

"What do you mean?" asked Morris, in surprise.

"Why it may save the old gent the shock of a sudden surprise."

"I don't see what you are trying to get at," replied Morris, evidently puzzled.

"You don't?" chuckled the sport, sardonically.

"No, I don't."

"You say your brother couldn't tell the old gent anything so bad of you that he wouldn't believe?"

"That's what I said."

"Well, that ought to be a load off your mind."

"Why ought it?"

"Because, Master Dean, on your own showing, something a bit out of the ordinary will have to be done to get you back on your pins."

"That's a neat way of getting back to business," laughed the young man uneasily.

"Well, you see it's business that won't keep, young gent. Debts of honor——"

"Oh, Bishop will wait, I guess. He knows I'm good for that fifteen cases."

"But how about me?" retorted Mr. Spavinger.

"You!" exclaimed Morris, in astonishment. "I don't owe you anything."

"Oh, you don't?" replied Mr. Spavinger, calmly. "What a short memory you've got, Master Dean."

"I tell you I don't owe you a red," shouted Morris. "I don't see how you make it out that I do."

Mr. Spavinger put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a memorandum book.

He turned the leaves over with great deliberation until he came to a certain page.

"Now, young gent, first of all did you or did you not tell me to put ten dollars on the first race, me to select the horse?"

"I did, and I gave you the money."

"Key-rect. Well, I picked Tam O'Shanter. He slipped a shoe and came in last, so you lost. Secondly, did you ask me to pick a winner for the second race to the extent of another ten?"

"Yes, and you got the money for that, too."

"Right you are. I thought Jack-o'-Lantern a likely horse to come in first. He was a nose ahead in the home stretch and ought to have won."

"Then why didn't he?"

"Because he slipped a cog and Tallyho beat him by a length. That disposes of two counts. Thirdly, I said I had my eye on a long shot for the third race, and you told me to put up another ten on that race, didn't you?"

"Sure I did, and you——"

"Got the money? Of course I did. I slapped your ten on Bobolink, but unfortunately she lost and so you lost again."

"I should think I did."

"Now we come to the fourth race, the most important of all. I thought I had a sure winner for that and you told me to go twenty-five cases on her, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"The man who gave me the tip ran in a cold deck on me I am sorry to say. I put your money on Minnehaha for first place, and she lost by three lengths, coming in fourth. That was hard luck for it did you out of seventy-five dollars."

Morris made no reply.

He was thoroughly discouraged by his ill-luck.

"Now," went on Nelson Spavinger, after a pause, during which he cast a sidelong glance at his dupe, "comes the fifth race."

"I didn't put up any money on that race," cried Morris, looking at the sport.

"I know you didn't," replied Mr. Spavinger, coolly. "That's just what I was trying to get at. I suggested that you back Jim Dandy."

"And I told you I had no more money to put up," interrupted Morris.

"That's right," replied the sport placidly. "And what did I say?"

"You said you'd lend me a fiver if I wanted you to."

"Pre-cisely. You took me up and signed your fist to this I-O-U I have here, didn't you?"

"I did, but afterward I turned the bet down and you threw the paper under your chair."

"I hate to dispute your word, young gent, but if I recollect the matter right you told me to make that fifty plunks instead of five, and put it through, which I did."

"Fifty dollars!" exclaimed Morris, aghast, for he knew

that Jim Dandy did not come in one, two or three in the last race. "You must be crazy."

"Excuse me. I altered the five to fifty as you told me, put up the dust and I regret to say you lost again, consequently," with a cunning glance at the young man, "you owe me fifty cases, which, seeing as I'm particularly hard up, I'd like to collect."

"This is a swindle!" cried Morris, jumping to his feet in a rage.

"Hold hard, young gent, don't be so violent. You're not going to welsh, are you, after I've been and put my good money up for you to win? It ain't my fault that Jim Dandy got the tantrums and lost his head. He had a good show to win."

"But I never told you to put up fifty dollars on anything for me," asserted Morris.

"This paper says you did," replied Mr. Spavinger, coolly.

"I don't care anything about that paper. It's no good."

"Isn't it? Well, now I thought it was. I said to myself, after the colt lost, the young gent 'll feel sore to think he has to make this good. It ain't impossible that he may refuse to honor his I-O-U. In that case why I'm afraid I'd have to call and see his father about——"

"My father!" gasped Morris.

"Pre-cisely—your father. He'd pay it I guess."

"If you called on my father with that paper it would ruin me," cried Morris, with a livid face.

"I ain't anxious to call on him," replied Mr. Spavinger, cheerfully. "If you say you'll pay me this week I'll let it go at that."

"But I don't owe you that fifty," replied Morris, passionately.

"All right. I ain't going to argue the matter. Your father——"

The young man sat down with a groan.

"Now look here, young gent; what's the use of getting down in the mouth? I wouldn't press you but I must have funds, see? You say you haven't the money," said Nelson Spavinger, lighting a fresh cigar. "What of it? You've got a brother that keeps a store and is making money, ain't you? Very good. What's the matter with borrowing enough from him to square yourself all around, as well as to take another go at the horses?"

"Didn't I tell you that my brother wouldn't lend me a cent to save my life?"

"Well, couldn't you borrow it without him knowing anything about it? Let me whisper in your ear."

Nelson Spavinger bent over toward the young man and said something in a low tone of voice which Jack, who had heard the whole conversation to this point, did not catch.

Morris started back as if he had been stung by a venomous insect.

"No, no," he gasped, "I couldn't do that. I couldn't."

And Jack saw that his face had grown pale and haggard, and that he shivered as with the ague.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK'S PLAN.

Nelson Spavinger puffed his cigar with the utmost serenity while he watched the young chap he was endeavoring to ruin, out of the corners of his shifty, black eyes.

Mr. Spavinger was not troubled with any unpleasant twinges of conscience.

If he possessed such a thing he had long since cowed it into silence.

His appearance at that moment was that of a man who had concluded a ticklish business to his satisfaction.

Morris Dean was reaping a crop of wild oats he had carelessly sowed—and the harvest was a bitter one.

He knew that he was being swindled by the man he had trusted, but he couldn't help himself, or at least he thought he couldn't.

It would have been well for him if he had gone straight from that shanty to his father, confessed his foolish conduct, and promised to turn over a new leaf.

But, unfortunately, Morris Dean wasn't built that way.

He was a moral coward.

Sooner than face the music he looked around for some other means of escaping the snare in which his crafty associate had entangled him.

Mr. Spavinger had suggested, in a whisper, that he could rob his brother.

Morris recoiled from such a proposition, not because he was opposed to taking what didn't belong to him, if he could do so without being detected, but because the victim in that case would be his brother.

He disliked his brother, it is true, but he didn't have the nerve to rob him.

"If it was only somebody else," he muttered to himself; "somebody who——"

At that moment the father of all evil must have been at his elbow, for an idea came into his head—an idea that rather appealed to him, though it was dangerous.

And then, fool that he was, he must bring it to the notice of Mr. Spavinger—the very man of all others he should have kept it from if he had any serious thoughts of putting it into execution.

The color returned to his face and the courage to his heart.

"You've taken a mean advantage of me, Mr. Spavinger," he said. "You know as well as I do that you're trying to bunco me out of fifty cases. I did not tell you to make any bet on the fifth race. I was a fool to sign my name to any paper, but since I did, I've got to take my medicine."

"Now you're talking sensible," nodded the crafty sport. "Are you going to do as I suggested? It ought to be easy for you."

"No, I'm not. I've got no great love for my brother, but I couldn't deliberately steal his money, even if I got a good chance, which isn't likely."

"Then how do you expect to raise the money? Remem-

ber, I must have it this week. If you don't ante up it will be my unpleasant duty to see the old gent himself."

"You needn't remind me again of that unpleasant fact," said Morris, with a frown. "However, I think I see my way out of the scrape."

Mr. Spavinger cocked up his ears and looked interested.

"The day after to-morrow is pay-day at the mill. It's a legal holiday, but owing to the rush of orders on deck the mill hands have been notified that they will have to work. The bank won't be open that day, as a matter of course, and consequently the cashier will draw the pay money to-morrow afternoon and keep it over night in the office safe. The combination has lately been changed, and I've an idea that the cashier keeps a record of it on a slip of paper, with the key of the inner compartment in his drawer to refresh his memory with in case he should forget the figures. I carry the key to the office. Nothing would be easier than for me to slip into the office, provided you would come to the gate and engage the attention of the watchman for say twenty minutes. If I find the combination I can open the safe and then the rest will be easy. I'll take enough to pay my debts and leave me with a snug sum of pocket money in my clothes besides. How does the idea strike you?"

"It strikes me all right. You've got more brains than I gave you credit for. You're going to do the job some time to-morrow night, ain't you?"

"Yes. Say about eleven o'clock, when the neighborhood is quite deserted."

"I'm ready to help you out, young gent. We'll meet accidental like at the Parlors, have a game or two of pool and then we'll go off together."

"All right. Now let's be off. I see it has cleared up."

Mr. Spavinger nodded, put the boxes back in the closet and blew out the light.

Then the hardened old sinner, and the young one just starting out on the broad road that leads to moral destruction, picked up their umbrellas and left the shanty.

"Well," said Jack Clyde to himself, as he was left alone in the old shack, "if I haven't learned considerable this night about the inside character of Morris Dean I'm out of my calculation. So he bets on the races, does he? This time he seems to have caught it in the neck. If he isn't an easy bird to pluck I'm much mistaken, that's all. The idea of his giving his money to that skin to pick winners for him! Mr. Spavinger simply played him for a chump. I greatly doubt if he placed a single one of those bets. It was easy for a man of his stamp to put Dean's money in his pocket, and then come back and hand out a fake story to Morris. It was such a simple game that he must have laughed in his sleeve more than once. And then the avaricious old rascal wasn't satisfied at that but he must work a bit of bunco on top of it. Now to extricate himself from his hole, Morris is going to try and rob the office safe at the mill. He'll do it, too, I don't think. I'm going to treat Morris Dean to the surprise of his life. I'll

give him a shock that he won't forget for a long time to come."

Thus speaking, Jack walked to the front window and looked out.

He saw Mr. Spavinger and Morris Dean vanishing down the road.

"It's too late for me to go on to Bertha Garland's home now. It must be past nine o'clock. She'll think the rain stood me off, so I'll go back home."

On his way home Jack paused before a neat white cottage that bore a sign "For Sale."

"I wonder how long it will be before I have money enough to buy such a little home as that for aunt and sis? I am afraid it will be a good many years yet. It's tough to be poor, and living from hand to mouth, but I don't mean to be poor always. I'm going to leave no stone unturned to get ahead in the world. Every boy has his chance to rise and make himself somebody—why not I? The manager of our mill was a poor boy once, and he worked himself to the front by his own exertions alone. I guess I can do the same. At any rate, it won't be my fault if I don't succeed. Some day I'll own a cottage as good as this—perhaps better."

Jack continued on his way, and in ten minutes reached the plain dwelling his aunt rented for a few dollars a month.

Plain as it looked without, and humble its furnishings within, it was the home of peace and content—happier than many a more pretentious one in the town.

"I did not expect you back so soon, Jack," smiled his aunt, Mrs. Susan Frost. "How is Bertha to-night?"

"I couldn't say, Aunt Sue. I didn't go to her house after all. The rain held me up so long in that old shanty down the road that I decided it was too late to call and so I came back."

"That was too bad, and she was expecting you, too."

"Yes, I guess she was; but it can't be helped. That's one of the disadvantages of not owning an umbrella. Good night, auntie, I'm going to bed."

Next morning Jack met his friend Andy Blossom on the corner as usual.

"Hello, Jack!" said Andy. "What do you know this morning?"

"I know something that'll make you stare all right," replied Jack.

"Is that so?" asked Andy, with some interest. "What is it?"

"I'm going to tell you; but I want you to keep it to yourself."

"I'll be mum if you say so," agreed Andy, on the tip-toe of curiosity.

"It concerns Morris Dean."

"Does it? I'll bet it's nothing to his credit," replied Andy, who, in common with the other mill hands, had a very poor opinion of the time-keeper. "What's he been up to?"

"I found out several things about him last night that

rather opened my eyes. I never took much stock in him any way, in spite of the fact that he's enjoyed advantages that the rest of us haven't had; but I'm bound to say I did not suspect him to be the reckless young rascal he is."

"What did you find out about him?" asked Andy, eagerly.

"I'll tell you the whole story and you can judge for yourself what kind of a chap he really is."

Jack then related to Andy his adventure of the preceding evening in the old shanty on Northbridge road.

"And he really means to rob the office safe to-night?" cried Andy, in astonishment.

"That seems to be his programme."

"What are you going to do? Tell the manager?"

"I suppose that is what I ought to do; but I've another plan."

"What is it?"

"I propose to catch him in the act myself."

"How are you going to manage it?"

"Well, you must help me."

"I'll do it, bet your boots. It would just suit me to have a hand in showing that chap up. He's been treating the girls meaner than dirt since he's been time-keeper. I've got it in for him especially for the shabby way he's acted toward Martha Higgins. He's shut her out six times in the last three months, and I've been looking for a chance to pay him up for it."

Martha Higgins was a sweet little orphan that Andy was paying a good deal of attention to, and it was quite natural for him to resent any indignity offered her.

"We'll take say four of the men—I'm going to pick them out—and we'll come to the mill to-night, put the watchman wise to the matter, and lay for him and Mr. Spavinger, his sporting friend, who is going to act as his accomplice. I guess it will be a big surprise to them to find themselves caught in the act."

"I'll bet it will," grinned Andy.

"I've concluded this will be the best way to deal with them. If I was to tell the manager this morning he might question Morris in his office about the matter. Dean would naturally deny the truth of my story, and his word would be as good as mine; in fact, better, for he would no doubt call in Mr. Spavinger to back him up. I haven't any witness to corroborate my statement, as I was alone in the shanty. So you can see he'd have the best of me. Of course, after that Morris wouldn't think of carrying out his plan against the office safe, and as there would then be no proof of his alleged rascality, the chances are a good many people would think I reported the matter solely to get him into a scrape."

"That's right. The manager is a friend of his father's, and gave him the job in the office. He would hate to see Morris get into trouble. Now if we catch the chap red-handed it will be different. It will open the manager's eyes to Dean's real character, and he will be obliged to take such action as the case demands."

That ended the discussion for the present, as the two boys had arrived at the mill gate.

They passed Morris Dean without giving him a look, and the time-keeper checked them off on his sheet.

Bertha Garland did not appear that day and another girl was put on her loom.

The management, however, did not dock her, as the circumstances excused her absence.

When noontime came, Jack called aside four men in whom he had every confidence, told them what Morris Dean proposed to do in the office that night, and they pledged themselves to join in with Jack and Andy in his scheme to catch the unpopular time-keeper with the goods on.

CHAPTER V.

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS ON.

About nine o'clock that night Jack and Andy met the four mill hands at a certain corner not far from the mill, and the entire party started for the building.

Arrived at their destination, Andy was boosted over the fence and sent to find the watchman, and give him an inkling of the situation.

He came to the gate and let the party inside.

"Now, Jones," said Jack, who was the self-constituted leader in the proceedings, "you'd better be near the gate around eleven o'clock. In fact, it would be a good idea if you opened the gate and stood there, smoking. You may expect to see this sporting gent, Mr. Spavinger, come down the street. If he carries out the programme agreed upon last night, he'll stop and engage you in conversation. You must get him inside the gate so he can't escape when we're ready to secure him. That's your part of this job, and I expect you to carry it out in good shape. Don't give him any reason to suspect you are on to the scheme."

"All right, Clyde, you can depend on me. Whether I get him inside the fence or not, he won't dare to run when I pull my six-shooter on him," replied the watchman.

Seeing that the watchman understood what was expected of him, Jack led his assistants into the ground floor of the mill and posted them in the entry between the office and the mill proper.

Then he proceeded to make sundry preparations he had figured on for catching Morris Dean at the right moment and showing him for what he was—a night thief.

His plan was quite original in its way, and was really not necessary under the circumstances, but it pleased Jack to trap his man after his own ideas.

He took a long, thin line and made a running noose at one end.

Leaving the noose lying on the floor of the office near the safe he passed the other end through one of the square holes in the brass top of the office partition, and then a yard from that point he passed it back through another similar hole, leaving the end of the line dangling on the inside of the partition.

"That isn't a bad thief-catching trap," he said, with a

grin, surveying the arrangement with a critical eye. "The next thing will be to see if it works to suit my taste."

He blew out the lamp and placed it on a nearby desk, then he went to the window overlooking the street to watch for the coming of Morris Dean.

The office clock struck eleven before there was a sign of a human being on the street; then around the corner came two shadows that presently resolved themselves into Morris and his associate, Nelson Spavinger.

They paused within a few feet of the window where Jack was looking out, and held a final consultation, then the sport continued on down the street and Morris watched him for a minute or two.

He saw the watchman step outside and stand in front of Mr. Spavinger, and that was his signal to get busy.

Jack, in the meanwhile, had taken up his post under the nearest desk to the safe, whence he could keep a sharp eye on the faithless clerk's movements when he got down to business, and yet would be screened from observation by a couple of tall stools which he had arranged for that purpose.

Presently a key rattled in the lock of the street door, which opened and then shut behind Morris Dean.

He walked quickly toward the end of the office where the safe stood, spied the lamp and lit it.

Going to the cashier's tall desk, the very one under which Jack was hiding, he tried a certain drawer, and found it locked, as he expected it would be.

He was prepared for such an emergency.

Taking a piece of steel from his pocket he inserted it into the crevice of the drawer, close to the lock, and exerted force enough to snap the lock off.

He then opened the drawer, looked inside and took out a key and a slip of paper.

He examined the paper in the light of the lamp.

Apparently satisfied he had obtained what he wanted, he placed the lamp on the floor near the safe so its light would shine right on the combination, and then, with the contents of the paper for a guide, he set to work to open the safe.

Jack watched him closely as he worked, and at length saw Morris grasp the round steel knob and swing open the safe door.

Then Dean stopped and listened attentively.

Feeling reassured, he applied the key he had taken from the cashier's drawer to the keyhole of the inner steel compartment, where the money he was after lay.

It was but the work of a moment for him to open this door.

Then he grabbed one of the packages of bills, examined the denominations and thrust it into an inside pocket of his jacket.

He was about to close and lock the steel inner door, having secured as much money as he wanted, when the watcher under the desk took a hand in the proceedings.

Creeping softly as a shadow from his hiding place, the

boy tip-toed over to the spot where the noose lay within a foot or two of the kneeling clerk.

Jack flung the noose over the thief's head, and it fell around his arms.

Seizing the other end of the line, he pulled it taut, drawing Dean up to the screen a prisoner.

"Help!" yelled the boy, and in rushed the crowd.

Andy Blossom led the four mill hands forward.

"Morris Dean!" they exclaimed in one voice, in apparent surprise, while the captured clerk, struggling in vain to escape from the noose which held him in a vise-like grip, looked at them with a scared, white face.

"Here, Andy," said Jack, "just hold this line and don't let it give a single inch; I'm going to telephone to Manager Burnside. Three of you," to the men, "go out to the gate and secure Mr. Spavinger. Then bring him in here."

Jack rang up Mr. Burnside's home and connected with the manager, who had gone to bed.

"Come over to the office, sir," said the boy. "A thief has broken into your office safe and we have nabbed him."

"I'll come right over," replied the manager. "In the meantime telephone for a couple of policemen."

"That's what I am going to do, sir. Good-by."

Then Jack rang up the police station, told the person in charge to send two officers to the mill to take charge of a detected thief and his accomplice.

Hardly had he hung up the receiver before there was a noise in the entry and presently Mr. Spavinger was led into the office by the mill hands and the watchman.

He protested loudly against such treatment, but nobody paid any attention to him.

When his eyes rested on Morris Dean pinned up against the wire partition, his faced lived with consternation at the predicament he was in, the sport's heart failed him.

He saw that a screw had worked loose in the clerk's little scheme, and realized that the young man was in a serious scrape.

Still he did not see how he could be connected with the affair unless Morris had betrayed him.

It struck him right away that the clerk must have implicated him, otherwise why should these men have jumped on and secured him.

He didn't relish the outlook at all, but determined to swear himself out of it.

Believing Morris Dean had acted the part of a cur, he had no sympathy for the youth he had driven to execute the crime at which he had been caught.

As soon as Mr. Spavinger saw that Jack Clyde was running things, he appealed to him.

"Why am I treated in this high-handed manner, young man?" he demanded, with an appearance of virtuous indignation. "Somebody will have to pay for this outrage."

"You have been taken charge of because you are this chap's accomplice in his attempt to rob the office safe of this mill," replied Jack.

"Are you out of your senses, young man?" exclaimed Mr. Spavinger. "Who has said I am his accomplice?"

"I say so," answered the boy, coolly.

"You!" cried the sport, sarcastically. "You do not seem to know who I am."

"Oh, yes, I do. Your name is Spavinger."

This reply rather staggered the turfy gentleman.

"Do you mean to say that young rascal you have caught has connected me with his crime?" roared Mr. Spavinger, wrathfully.

"No; he hasn't uttered a word since he was pulled up against that partition."

"Then I don't see on what ground——"

"I wouldn't waste any more useless words on the subject, Mr. Spavinger," replied Jack. "You will have the opportunity to prove your innocence, if you can, to-morrow before the magistrate."

"Do you mean to say I have got to go to jail to-night?"

"It looks that way."

"I shall sue the mill company for this outrage."

"Maybe you will; but I have my doubts."

At that juncture Mr. Burnside, the manager, came in at the door.

His brow clouded when he saw the open safe door.

"Well, Clyde," he began, "how——"

Then his eye rested on the prisoner pinned to the partition.

"Morris Dean!" he exclaimed in utter amazement.

"Why, what does this mean?"

"It means, sir," replied Jack, "that we caught Dean in the act of taking money from the safe."

"Impossible!" gasped Mr. Burnside.

"It is the fact, sir. He has a package of money on his person at this moment, which I saw him take from the inner compartment of the safe. Before he could get any more I flung a noose about him and yanked him up against the partition."

"Morris Dean," said the manager, walking up to him, "have you taken money from that safe to-night?"

The unfortunate young man made no reply to this question, but his face proclaimed his guilt, and Mr. Burnside could only draw one conclusion—that the son of Matthew Dean, one of the most respected of Northbridge's retired merchants, was indeed a detected thief.

CHAPTER VI.

MORRIS DEAN AND MR. SPAVINGER ARE BOTH HELD FOR TRIAL.

"Let him loose," said Mr. Burnside, with a sorrowful expression on his countenance, and Andy Blossom dropped the end of the line.

The manager relieved Morris of the noose, put his hand into his inside pocket and drew out the package of bills.

"I am truly pained to find the son of Matthew Dean in such a compromising situation," he said, regretfully. "Have you any explanation to offer for your conduct?"

"I needed the money," replied Morris, doggedly. "I

needed it more than I ever wanted anything in my life before. That's all there is to it."

"Why should you commit a crime to get it when you might have asked your father for what you required?"

"I am sorry now that I didn't, though it wouldn't have done me any good," replied the dejected clerk.

"I am afraid you have got yourself into a very serious scrape, Morris. How you will be able to get out of it I cannot even guess at this moment."

Then turning to Jack he said:

"Who is this other person? Is he implicated in this affair, too?"

"Yes, sir. He's Dean's accomplice."

"That's a lie!" exclaimed Mr. Spavinger, hotly. "I had nothing to do with him whatever. I was talking to the watchman of this mill at the yard gate when I was set upon in a most outrageous manner by those three men and dragged in here. I demand that I be released, sir."

"Do you know this man, Morris?" asked the manager.

"I do," replied the clerk.

"What is his name?"

"Nelson Spavinger."

"Is he connected with you in this affair?"

Morris made no answer.

Mr. Burnside repeated the question with some sharpness.

"Yes, sir; he's the whole cause of my being in this scrape," blurted out the young man.

"You lying young villain!" roared the turfy gentleman, starting forward with the evident intention of striking the clerk in the face.

Jack, who was standing near, interfered and grasped his upraised arm.

At that moment the two police officers appeared at the door, and Mr. Spavinger considered it the part of prudence to subside.

Mr. Burnside reluctantly ordered one of the officers to take charge of Morris, and then pointed out Mr. Spavinger to the other.

"I give them both in charge," he said. "Take them to the station-house. I will follow presently and make the charge against them."

The policemen slipped handcuffs on their prisoners and led them away.

Mr. Burnside returned the money to the safe, relocked it and put the key in the inner compartment in his pocket.

"I am at a loss to understand how you and the other mill hands happened to be on hand here at the very moment you were needed to save the company's property," he said, turning to Jack.

"I will give you the whole story on the way to the station-house, sir," replied the boy.

"Very well. I shall be glad to hear it."

The four mill men were dismissed, with the manager's thanks for their services, the office was locked up, and then Mr. Burnside, accompanied by Jack and Andy, started for the station-house.

On the way Jack told the manager about his adventure of the previous night at the old shanty.

"Why did you not inform me this morning about this matter so I could have taken measures to prevent this lamentable affair? By taking this thing into your own hands you have ruined Morris Dean's life career. He will certainly be sent to prison, as the evidence against him is as clear as daylight."

"I acted as I thought best in the matter, sir. Had you taxed Dean with the contemplated crime he would most certainly have denied it. My unsupported word would have gone for nothing. In fact, I think I would have been shown up in a bad light myself. The only way that I could see to prove my statement was to lay for him and catch him in the act. This I have done. It is Dean's own funeral—not mine—that he chose to engage in such a criminal enterprise."

"I don't see that he's entitled to sympathy any way," spoke up Andy. "He's set every employee in the mill against him since he's been time-keeper by his mean tactics at the gate."

"I don't understand you," said the manager.

Then Andy proceeded to enlighten him concerning Dean's questionable methods with the girls when they reached the gate a moment late.

"Why wasn't this reported to me?" asked the manager.

"Because there isn't a talebearer in the mill—that's why, sir," replied Andy, promptly.

The charge was duly made by the manager against Morris Dean and Nelson Spavinger, and the pair were locked up in separate cells for the night.

There was a reporter at the station-house at the time and he wanted to know the full particulars of the attempted robbery at the mill.

Andy told him all he knew about the matter, and the rest of the facts he afterward got from Jack.

The Northbridge Daily Times had the whole story in a prominent part of the first page in the morning, and the whole town was talking about it next morning over their breakfast tables.

It would have been a terrible shock for Matthew Dean if he had learned about the disgrace of his youngest son from the newspaper as his acquaintance did.

Mr. Burnside, appreciating this, made it his business to go directly to the Dean home from the station-house and break the news as gently as he could to the young man's father.

Of course every one in the mill knew in the morning that Morris Dean was in the station-house for attempting to rob the office safe the night before, and everybody knew that Jack Clyde was the cause of his incarceration.

While the girls were more or less shocked by the intelligence, Flora Watson was the only one really upset by the fate which had overtaken Morris Dean.

The police court was crowded that morning, as the Dean family was well known in Northbridge, and they had a large circle of acquaintance.

After two or three minor cases had been disposed of, Dean and Spavinger were brought into court, looking considerably the worse for their night's lodging in a common cell.

The prisoners both pleaded not guilty, Morris doing so on the advice of the lawyer provided to look after his interests by his father.

Jack Clyde was, of course, the star witness at the examination, and he gave his testimony in a clear and concise way.

Andy Blossom, the night watchman, and the four mill hands, gave their evidence in turn.

The case against Morris was clear beyond a doubt, and he was held for trial at the next term of the circuit court.

Mr. Spavinger's connection with the attempted robbery would hardly have been established had not Morris testified directly against him.

The sport endeavored to make his dupe out a liar, but did not succeed, and as a consequence he was also held as Dean's accomplice.

Both were admitted to bail, Mr. Spavinger's being placed as low as \$1,000, but as no one came forward to go his security he had to go back to his cell, while Morris went free on a bond signed by his father and another gentleman.

A few days later the Board of Directors of the Northbridge Cotton Mill held a special meeting, at which Jack Clyde was voted the thanks of the company and the sum of \$1,000 for his services in preventing the robbery of the safe, and bringing the criminal to justice.

The fact that Morris swore at his examination that he only intended to take the single package of bills found on his person had very little weight with the mill company—as a matter of fact, not one of the directors believed his statement, although it was really the truth.

After the meeting the manager called Jack into his office and, after informing him of the action taken by the company, presented him with the \$1,000 check.

The boy thanked him for it, but it was clear to him that Mr. Burnside was sore because the mill boy had taken the affair out of his hands, thereby preventing him from saving young Dean from the consequences of his rashness.

That fact, however, did not greatly worry Jack.

He had the approval of his own conscience, and the general approbation of his associates in the mill.

But, though he was not aware of the fact, he had made a serious enemy of Flora Watson, who hated him for the trouble he had brought on Morris Dean.

In her heart she determined to get square with him, and she included Bertha Garland in the same project of revenge.

CHAPTER VII.

MAKING MONEY.

Jack Clyde was the happiest boy in the mill when he left the manager's office with the company's check for \$1,000 in his pocket.

The very first thing he did was to show it to Bertha Garland, who had returned to her loom that day.

She congratulated him upon his good fortune, and at the first chance she whispered the news to the girl at the next loom.

Inside of an hour the fact that Jack Clyde had got a \$1,000 check from the company for catching Morris Dean in the act of robbing the office safe was known from one end of the floor to the other.

It also became known that Andy Blossom and the four mill hands who had helped Jack turn the trick had each been presented with \$20.

There was joy in the little cottage on the Northbridge road that night when our young hero displayed the check before the wondering eyes of Aunt Sue and his cripple sister Gertie.

"What are you going to do with it, Jack?" asked Gertie, with sparkling eyes. "Put it in the bank?"

"The bank is a good place to keep one's superfluous money," nodded her brother, "but I think maybe I can do better with it."

"How, brother, dear?"

"I might buy that cottage down the road that's for sale, and save auntie paying rent. The price I have been told is \$1,200. Auntie would have to buy it in her name and give a mortgage for \$200. It would be fine to own our own home, and that's a dandy little house and grounds. I've had my eye on it ever since the sign went up. I wish you and auntie would look it over to-morrow and see how you like it."

"Of course we'll do so if you wish us to, Jack," replied his sister.

Mrs. Frost, on being consulted, was quite pleased with the idea of taking the house, if it proved to be as satisfactory as it looked.

"I think it's a bargain, auntie," said Jack. "You couldn't buy the ground and build a house anywhere near as good as that for \$1,200."

"It's a wonder it hasn't been snapped up by somebody, then. Good things don't go begging long, as a rule."

"Sometimes they do. I'll tell you an instance. There was a fine place on Prescott Street that was in the market a whole year at \$3,000. Several builders said it was dirt cheap at that figure, and yet nobody seemed to want it. One day a man came along, looked the place over and bought it. The contract had scarcely been signed before one of the very people who had said it was dirt cheap at \$3,000, made an offer to take it off his hands at \$500 advance. He finally sold his option to this man for \$1,000. Inside of two months the second buyer sold the house to another man right in this town for \$5,000. It was worth it, too. Yet the third buyer could have saved that \$2,000 any time within the year. That's the way with some people. They won't take a thing at any price till somebody else steps in and grabs it, then they suddenly discover they want it bad, and are willing to raise the ante themselves."

Jack, however, much to his aunt's surprise, suddenly decided not to buy the cottage—at least not right away.

The fact of the matter was he had unexpectedly discovered a chance to make a stake by shrewd dealing.

He had heard that a hardware store on one of the most prominent corners of Main Street would soon be for rent.

The man who had run it for years had lately died and the widow was going to sell the stock in trade and fixtures at auction, and dispose of the lease, which had three years yet to run.

This fact would have had no interest for Jack but that he knew an agent of the National Tobacco Trust was in town looking for an eligible site to open a retail store, and he judged the corner in question would suit him to a T.

So Jack made a break at once for the widow who held the lease and asked her what she would take for it.

She told him \$600.

"I'll give you \$25 for the refusal of it for two days at that figure," said Jack, promptly.

The lady objected to such a small amount, but finally they compromised on \$50 for a seven days' option.

The boy handed her the money and she signed the option.

He rushed off at once to the hotel where the tobacco trust's agent was stopping, and found that the man was just going to a show at the opera house that evening.

Jack lost no time in making him an offer of the lease of the hardware store.

"Who do you represent?" asked the agent, growing interested at once, for the corner was just what he wanted.

"I was not aware that location was for rent."

"I represent myself," replied Jack, with some dignity.

"I control the lease of the store for the next three years. The rent is \$60 a month as it stands. I will sell you the lease for twelve hundred dollars cash, or I will sub-let the store to you for one year at one hundred dollars a month, with privilege of renewal at the same rent for the rest of the term covered by the lease."

"When will the store be vacant?"

"You can have possession on the first of the month."

"I'll give you one thousand dollars for the lease," said the agent.

Jack shook his head.

"I can do better than that with a man who wants to establish a drug store on that corner."

"I'll go down there with you and look the store over."

"All right," replied Jack.

The agent was pleased with the store and decided to head off the druggist by agreeing to the boy's terms.

Jack gave him a written agreement to turn the lease over to him on the following evening, and the agent paid him one hundred dollars on account.

The man then went on to the Opera House while Jack paid a visit to the widow.

He paid her the six hundred dollars and she transferred the lease of the corner store to him.

Next evening he met the agent at the hotel and com-

pleted the deal, pocketing a profit of six hundred dollars by the transaction.

He was now prepared to buy the cottage and pay all the cash for it, which would leave him four hundred dollars to put in the bank.

It happened, however, that next morning he noticed an advt. in the morning's paper of a much better house, with more ground, that was offered at a bargain to close out an estate.

The following day being Sunday he and his aunt went around and looked at it.

It was a very desirable place, and dirt cheap at twenty-five hundred dollars.

"We'd better take it, auntie," he said.

"It's too big for us, Jack," she objected. "Besides you've only got sixteen hundred dollars, and would be obliged to put a mortgage on it. That would cost us fifty dollars a year in interest. Now the cottage on Northbridge road you could get free and clear and still have several hundred to draw interest in the savings bank. This is a very fine place, and I have no doubt it is cheap, but it is foolish for you to buy it I think."

"Auntie, I see a speculation in this," said Jack. "I'll bet I could resell this property at a profit before you even took title to it. This house is a snap at twenty-five hundred dollars. It's worth four thousand dollars if it's worth a dollar. I don't believe in losing such a chance. Here's a gentleman and lady coming to look at it now. We'll run around to the lawyer's house and tell him we'll take the property. You can pay him one hundred dollars down. He'll give you a receipt dated yesterday to make it legal. You can then sign the contract any day next week you like, and pay him four hundred more. It will take thirty days I guess to have the title passed upon, and during that interval we may have an offer to take the contract off our hands. If not you can buy the property as soon as the title is shown to be all right, and then I'll advertise the place for sale at whatever price I think it ought to bring."

Whatever Jack said always went with his aunt, for she had the utmost confidence in his business sagacity. boy though he was, so they went around to call on the lawyer who had charge of the property.

The lawyer accepted the one hundred dollars, gave his receipt therefor and promised to have the contract ready in a few days for Mrs. Frost to sign at his office.

That evening a gentleman called at the Frost cottage.

Jack recognized him as the escort of the lady they had seen looking at the house just as they left for the lawyer's.

He had called, he said, to see if Mrs. Frost would take five hundred dollars for her option on the property.

"No, sir," replied Jack, speaking up, "we have a bargain in that property. It is easily worth four thousand dollars, just as it stands."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the visitor, with a frown.

"Very well, sir. Then we won't argue the matter. I wouldn't advise my aunt to take a cent less than twelve hundred dollars for her option."

"Then we can't do business," said the gentleman rising and taking his leave.

On the evening of the day Mrs. Frost signed the contract the gentleman called again, and after some dickering offered one thousand dollars for the option.

"We'll let you have an answer in a day or two," replied Jack.

"I think you ought to have accepted his offer, Jack," said Aunt Sue, after their visitor had departed. "He might change his mind."

"I'll risk it," grinned Jack.

Next day Mrs. Frost got a letter from the lawyer saying that he could get her fifteen hundred dollars for her option if she cared to accept it.

"Take it," said Jack, when she showed him the letter that night.

Two days later Mrs. Frost received a check from the purchaser, not the gentleman who had dickered with them, for two thousand dollars, which included the five hundred dollars she had paid on the contract, and Jack found himself worth thirty-one hundred dollars—twenty-one hundred dollars of which he had made in less than a month through a shrewd use of the one thousand dollars he had received from the mill company.

"I guess you'd better buy the cottage up the road now, auntie," he said that evening.

"Are you sure that you won't change your mind tomorrow?" she asked with a smile.

"I guess not. I have no more irons in the fire at present."

"Well, after buying the cottage you'll still have nineteen hundred dollars to your credit in the bank."

"Yes. That ought to be enough to see me through my next scheme," he replied, putting on his hat, for he had promised Bertha he would call on her that evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRIKE.

It soon began to be whispered about among the girls on the fourth floor of the mill that Flora Watson had become very thick with David Jobkins, the foreman of her section.

Every one knew that Jobkins had been making up to her for some time, but without any more success than he had had with Bertha Garland, for Flora had always shown a decided preference for Morris Dean.

Now since Morris had got into such serious trouble Flora changed about and began to favor the foreman.

At least it seemed that way to the other girls.

As a matter of fact, however, Flora had a purpose in view, and she expected to accomplish it through Jobkins, whom she really did not care even a little bit for.

Jobkins readily fell into the trap.

He was quite infatuated with Flora, and was willing to do most anything to make himself solid with her.

He had not the faintest idea that the girl was meeting Morris on the sly two or three evenings a week.

Nor that these two were plotting to involve Jack Clyde in a peck of trouble through his connivance.

Flora now permitted Jobkins to escort her home from work most every night.

On one of these occasions she grew quite confidential with him.

"Do you know," she said, "I can't bear that Jack Clyde. I can't understand what the girls see in him to rave about him as they do. They actually say he's the best looking boy in town," tossing her head disdainfully.

"They're away off their perch," replied Jobkins. "For my part I hate the chap. I wish I could find some excuse for givin' him the bounce."

"I wish you could, too. I'm tired of seeing him around the mill," she said.

"He doesn't give me a chance. He's too plaguey correct in everythin' he does. And now to make the matter more difficult, he's made himself solid with the company by showin' up that lobster, Morris Dean."

If Jobkins had seen the look Flora flashed upon him when he referred sneeringly to Morris he wouldn't have felt quite so sure of the girl's feelings toward him.

"Isn't there any way we could get him out of the mill?" she asked.

"Not that I know of," he answered.

"I've heard there is likely to be trouble at the mill over the new rules that go into effect next week," she said after a pause.

"I reckon there will be," nodded Jobkins, significantly.

"The men are holding meetings on the subject, I think, and are trying to get the girls over on their side."

"That's right," admitted the foreman.

"Do you think there's any possibility of a strike?"

"Yes, I think there is if the management doesn't haul in its horns."

"I heard Bertha Garland say today that she's opposed to having trouble with the company."

"She is, eh?" replied Jobkins. "Do you think she'd turn scab if we all went out?"

"I think she's just that kind of a creature," replied Flora, spitefully. "And she isn't the only one either that would do it."

"Who are the others?"

Flora mentioned a score of names.

"Confound the women!" snarled Jobkins. "They are always for takin' the bread out of a man's mouth."

"It isn't the girls alone we'll have to fight against. From what Bertha said Jack Clyde, Andy Blossom, and a dozen at least of the men, are sure to stand by the company."

"They will, will they?" hissed Jobkins. "Let them dare do it and we'll fix them. If there's trouble over the rules those who won't stand by the rest of us had better look out, that's all," said Jobkins threateningly.

"That is right," replied Flora. "If Jack Clyde stands out with the others, it will give you an excuse to fix him so he won't ever get back to the mill."

"You can gamble on it that we'll fix him," growled Jobkins. "And we'll fix him for keeps, too."

"I hope you will, David," she said, vindictively, "for I hate him."

This was the first time she had ever addressed the foreman by his Christian name, and he was tickled to death.

It was quite true that there was trouble brewing in the Northbridge Cotton Mill over the new and rather stringent rules about to be introduced by the manager.

A committee had waited on Mr. Burnside and objected to them, but the reply he made to the spokesman was by no means reassuring.

About two-thirds of the hands were dead against the new arrangement, while the other third, chiefly men with large families and girls who were the main support of their parents and brothers and sisters, objected to taking any action that would interfere with their employment.

Jack and Andy, after studying out the new regulations carefully, decided to stand by the company if there was trouble.

On Friday night the kicking hands held a meeting to arrive at a final decision as to what they were going to do.

After a stormy discussion it was voted to send the manager an ultimatum in the morning, giving him to understand that if the new rules were to be enforced they would quit work.

As the company had more orders on hand than they could fill with the whole force the kickers thought they had the company where the hair was short.

But they made a mistake.

Manager Burnside handled the Ultimatum Committee without gloves.

He told them that every employee who failed to report on Monday morning without a valid excuse, must consider themselves discharged, and that their places would immediately be filled with outsiders.

This stand taken by the manager angered the kickers and another meeting was called for that night.

At this meeting inflammatory speeches were made and the motion to stay away in a body on Monday morning was carried unanimously amid great enthusiasm.

Somebody carried the news to Mr. Burnside that evening, and as he had been expecting some such action on the part of the kickers he was fully prepared to deal with the situation.

At half-past six Monday morning Jack Clyde and Andy Blossom left their homes as usual to go to the mill.

When they reached the corner of the block in which the mill was located they were stopped by two of the seceded hands who had been told off as pickets, and who asked them to stand by the kickers and not go to the mill.

The boys refused to join the strikers, and as they moved on were called "scabs" by their late associates.

"We don't care what you call us," retorted Jack. "It isn't a question of wages or any union principle that's involved in this matter. The company has the right to make new rules if it chooses, and so long as they're within

reason I can't see why you fellows go to such an extreme as striking. You're making a mistake."

His words were received with hoots, so he and Andy went on and reported at the gate.

A number of the girls had already arrived, among them Bertha Garland.

Altogether about two-fifths of the hands were registered on the time-sheet when the whistle blew.

The manager was in his office, and as soon as he had examined the record of the arrivals he sent a telegram to Boston for a certain number of hands, and these were sent to Northbridge by the next train.

Mr. Burnside and several policemen met them on their arrival and escorted them to the factory, where they were immediately put to work in the places of the malcontents.

Apparently the company had won the struggle at the start off hands down.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT BERTHA HEARD IN THE SHANTY.

Nearly all of the kickers assembled in the neighborhood of the mill that morning and held a number of impromptu meetings at which the situation was canvassed and a few speeches were made.

Most of the girls who had been induced to join the ranks of the malcontents were discouraged by the outlook, and a large proportion of them applied at noon for their old jobs, but were told that the company had all the help it wanted at present.

During the day the manager secured lodgings for the new hands, and the prospects of the strikers looked mighty gloomy.

They felt very bitter against those of their late associates who had stood by the company and thus retained their positions in the mill.

David Jobkins developed into one of the most violent of the kickers.

When he saw that their cause was practically lost he tried to incite the mob to some act of violence that might frighten the new hands into shaking their jobs.

Most of the malcontents, while they listened to his harangue, rather objected to having a run-in with the police—a number of whom had been specially detailed to patrol the neighborhood and keep order.

Jobkins, however, found a few kindred spirits who expressed their readiness to go to any extreme to bring the company to terms.

They adjourned to a nearby barroom to talk it over.

It was decided to make an attempt to blow up the mill on the following night.

One of the men, an ingenious mechanic, said he would put together an infernal machine, with clock-work attachment, which would do the business.

The half dozen conspirators then adjourned to meet again next day.

A man lounging about the same saloon next morning

overheard Jobkins threaten to do up Jack Clyde at the first chance he could get.

This man's daughter was employed at the mill, being one of those who had not gone out on strike.

When he got home that night he told his daughter to warn the boy next day.

The girl, however, thought the matter serious enough to demand immediate attention.

As she lived only a short distance from Bertha Garland's home, and knowing that Jack Clyde called on Bertha quite often, she ran over to the Garland house to tell Bertha about Jobkins' threat.

Bertha was very much alarmed for the safety of the boy she thought so much of, and thanking her friend for bringing her the ominous intelligence she put on her hat and started down the road to the Frost cottage, intending to warn Jack.

Aunt Sue and Gertie Clyde were surprised, though none the less pleased, to see Bertha, whom they thought a good deal of.

It was the first time the girl had ever called to see Jack, and as she looked worried when Aunt Sue said that the boy was not at home, Mrs. Frost surmised there was something more in her visit than appeared on the surface.

Bertha, however, not wishing to worry Jack's relatives, evaded an explanation of what had brought her to the cottage.

"He went back to the mill after supper," said Aunt Sue.

"The mill is not running at night," replied Bertha in surprise.

"I know," answered Mrs. Frost; "but Manager Burnside wanted to see Jack in the office. I believe he intends to promote him to a higher position—in fact I think Jack is going to take the place in the office formerly held by young Dean."

"Do you really think so?" asked the girl, with a look of pleasure.

"So Jack intimated to me."

"I am so glad," replied Bertha. "He deserves to get ahead."

"Oh, he'll make his way up in the world all right," said Aunt Sue, proudly. "Jack is the smartest boy in town. Look how easily he made twenty-one hundred dollars with that one thousand dollars the company presented him with. It was his money that paid for that cottage up the road we're going to move into in a week or two, and he has nineteen hundred dollars in bank besides. He'll be a rich man one of these days I haven't the least doubt."

When Bertha left the Frost cottage she decided, notwithstanding that it was a lonesome walk in the darkness, to go to the mill, and if she saw a light in the office to wait until Jack came out; for she feared Jobkins and some of his cronies might be aware of the boy's presence at the mill, in which event it was not improbable that they would lie in wait for him on his way home.

It wasn't every girl that would have had the courage to undertake that walk, for the mill was situated in a section

of the town that was thinly built upon, and, consequently, wore a deserted and gloomy aspect at night.

It was a warm June evening, but the sky was overcast, and the lights along her way being few and far between, she grew more and more nervous as she drew nearer and nearer to the mill.

Suddenly she stopped.

The sound of men's voices fell on her ear—voices deep and gruff.

Whoever the men might be she had no wish to meet them.

They were following at such a rapid rate that she looked around to find a spot where she could hide and let them pass.

She knew the road well, for she passed over it twice a day, and remembered that there was an old shed a little way ahead in which she could conceal herself.

It stood back a dozen yards or so from the road, and she hastened her steps in that direction.

She flew up the well worn path that led to the shed, and had just time to gain the doorway, when she made out the dim outline of three figures coming along the road.

Instead of keeping straight on as she expected they would, the men, to her great dismay, turned into the path and came toward the shed.

Bertha had only time to shrink back in a corner of the place before the men entered the building.

Bertha Garland was a girl with plenty of courage, as we have intimated, but she was nervous and frightened enough, as she shrank back in her corner, while the intruders gathered around the opening of the shed and talked together in low tones.

At first she was too alarmed to listen to what they said, but as she recovered her self-possession a bit she began to understand the subject of their conversation.

It was not reassuring to her, and her alarm returned when she recognized the voice of David Jobkins, and saw that he was the leader of the party.

The shed was too dark for her to be discovered unless one of the men struck a match to light his pipe, and the possibility of such a thing happening made her look about for some object behind which she might hide herself.

There was nothing in the place but a heap of hay, and as it was close to where she stood, she determined to get behind it.

Little by little she managed to crawl behind the pile of fodder and crouch down.

Then she began to listen intently to what the men were saying, thinking they were on the lookout for Jack.

But Jack's name wasn't mentioned.

The three men had something of more importance on their hands at that moment.

She found they were awaiting the appearance of a comrade.

"What time was Jackson to be here?" asked one of the men.

"He ought to be here now," replied Jobkins, in an impatient tone. "I can't imagine what's keepin' him."

"He'll bring the machine with him, won't he?"

"What good would it do for him to come without it?" growled the foreman.

"That's so," put in another man. "We couldn't do a thing without that."

"Of course we couldn't," responded Jobkins, gruffly.

"I s'pose Jackson 'll plant it himself, won't he?" said the first speaker. "He ought to know best how to handle such ticklish things."

"Don't worry, Mike Clancy, you won't be asked to do it," answered the foreman with a sneer. "You and Briggs will have enough to do to keep your eyes skinned for the watchman while Jackson and me attends to the real work."

Bertha wondered what the machine could be that they expected to plant, where they were going to do it, and what their object could be in doing so.

She soon found out.

"Where are you going to put it?" asked Briggs.

"In the engine-room, and after the explosion there won't be any work done in the mill for the next month or two," said Jobkins with an evil laugh, which was echoed by his companions.

"Can it be that these men mean to blow up the mill to-night?" breathed Bertha. "I must do something to prevent that as soon as I can safely leave this place."

"Hush!" cried Clancy at this point. "Some one is coming."

There was silence in an instant, and Bertha heard a heavy tread approaching the shanty.

"It's Jackson," said Briggs.

"What's been keepin' you?" growled Jobkins when the newcomer entered the hut.

"I was down at the mill spyin' around. I saw a light in the manager's office."

"I wonder what he's doin' there?" said the foreman.

"He was talkin' to that young shaver, Jack Clyde," replied Jackson.

"The deuce he was!" exclaimed Jobkins. "I don't see what business he can have with that cub."

"Don't ask me," laughed Jackson. "I didn't hear what they were talkin' about."

"I'd like to get hold of that little monkey to-night," said the foreman. "I've a good sized grudge I'd like to settle with him."

"He ought to be goin' home soon," chuckled Clancy. "You might lay for him on the road if you think you've the time to spare. We'll help you catch him if you want, and help thump him, too. We all owe him somethin' for stickin' by the company, and helpin' to do us out of our jobs."

"Aye, that we will," agreed Briggs. "He needs a lesson that he won't soon forget."

"He'll get it, don't you fear, whether it's to-night or later on," said Jobkins, angrily. "And he'll get it good if I've got anythin' to say about it. I mean to put him out of business so he won't do no more work in that mill, or anywhere else for that matter."

He spoke with such a malicious intensity that Bertha's blood chilled with apprehension for Jack's safety.

She must and would try to save him at any hazard.

"Oh, blast the boy!" interjected Jackson. "Let's get down to business."

"Well," said Jobkins, "did you bring the machine?"

"Of course I did. It's under my jacket."

"How do you set it off?"

"It goes off itself."

"What!" cried the other three, beginning to back away from him.

Jackson laughed.

"Don't be afraid. It won't go off now. Do you take me for a fool to put my life in danger carryin' it around with me? It's as harmless as a ring-dove at the present moment," and he drew it forth from its place of concealment. "It's got to be wound up before it becomes dangerous."

"It goes off by clockwork, eh?" said Briggs.

"That's what it does," replied Jackson. "It's my own invention."

"Are you sure it will do the business?" asked Jobkins.

"As sure as you stand there," affirmed the other.

"It will smash the engine, will it?"

"It will wreck the engine-room completely."

"That's all we want to know. I'll help you place it while Clancy and Briggs look after the watchman."

"After you wind it up how long before it goes off?" inquired Clancy.

"I've got it timed for twenty minutes. That'll give us time enough to get a long way from the mill if we don't lag. Did you get something that'll answer for a jimmy to break into the engine-room?" he asked the foreman.

"Sure I did."

"Where is it?"

"Hid behind the straw in yonder corner."

At those words Bertha's heart nearly stopped beating with terror.

If the article they wanted was behind the fodder pile, as soon as Jobkins went to get it he would be sure to discover her concealed there.

What then would be the consequence?

CHAPTER X.

JACK IN THE TOILS.

"Hark!" cried Clancy in a low tone at this moment. All listened.

"Sounds like a boy whistlin'," said Briggs.

"I'll bet it's Jack Clyde on his way home from the mill," chipped in Jackson.

"Then we'd better nab him," said Jobkins. "We can tie him and leave him in this shanty till we've planted the bomb, then I'll come back and attend to his case."

"I'm with you," replied Clancy. "Two of us will be enough to capture the cub."

So Jackson and Briggs remained in the shanty while Jobkins and Clancy departed on their errand.

Bertha shivered with fear at the fate that awaited Jack.

But she could do nothing to save him, at least not as things stood.

She waited with strained attention for further developments.

In a few minutes the foreman and Clancy returned, dragging Jack Clyde between them.

"You pair of cowards!" roared the boy. "What game are you up to anyway?"

"You'll find out in good time," replied Jobkins, between his teeth. "Blame your fist! You almost put my eye out."

"Serves you right for attacking me as you did," retorted Jack. "It took two of you to down me, though. What are you going to do with me?"

"Shut up, you monkey!" snarled the foreman. "There's a bit of rope hangin' somewhere against the wall. Get it down, Jackson, and help me tie him up."

Jackson found the rope without striking a light, and the two men soon bound Jack securely hand and foot.

"Now put somethin' into his mouth for a gag," said Jobkins.

Jackson pulled out the boy's handkerchief and tied it tightly over his mouth.

"He's safe enough now," he said. "Push him out of the way."

"Let me make sure of it," said the foreman, going carefully over the bonds and making certain that Jack couldn't draw his hands out.

Satisfied that the prisoner could not escape by any exertions of his own, Jobkins got on his feet, gave the boy a vicious kick in the thigh and left him.

The kick was in cowardly revenge for the heavy blow Jack had given him in the road.

"Well, I think we might as well make a start," suggested Jackson. "The sooner we get the job over the better it'll suit me."

"All right," said the foreman. "I'll get that bar now."

"You'll need a light won't you?" said Clancy.

"Not me. I know just where to put my hand on it. There's too much straw lyin' around loose in this shack for me to strike a light."

As he spoke he started toward the pile of straw behind which Bertha crouched.

The girl's heart sank within her when she heard him moving straight toward the corner where she was hiding.

She held her breath, and her heart beat so loud and so fast that she was afraid it might betray her as it throbbed and thumped against her ribs.

She kept motionless as death in the hope that Jobkins might be able to get what he wanted without noticing her presence; but it was a forlorn chance.

When he was within a foot or so of her he stopped, and she heard him, and almost felt him, stoop down and begin to clear away the straw from the ground.

She could hear him breathe, and mutter something about the darkness, as he felt about with his hand within a few inches of her foot.

A minute or two passed in this way, the only sound being the rustling caused by the man's movements, and a muttered imprecation because he could not readily find what he sought.

"Haven't you found it yet?" asked Jackson, impatiently.

"No. I thought I could put my hand on it at once, but this infernal darkness queers me after all," replied Jobkins over his shoulder.

"I s'pose we'll have to strike a match for you," said Clancy putting his hand in his pocket to find one.

"No," replied the foreman. "Wait a moment. I'll have it in a moment."

It was a terrible ordeal for Bertha, for Jobkins was groping within an inch or two of her, and yet astonishing to relate he did not seem at all conscious of her presence.

"Ah! I've got it," he exclaimed at last, in a tone of satisfaction.

He rose up with the steel bar in his hand, actually brushing against Bertha's dress.

She drew a breath of relief as he moved away from the corner.

She knew she had escaped discovery by the narrowest possible margin.

"We'd better throw some of the straw over that boy," said Jackson. "You can't tell but some one might come in here while we're away."

"What's the use of takin' that trouble?" growled Jobkins. "Just shove him under it head first. It won't strangle him, and if it did it wouldn't make no difference anyhow, as far as I'm concerned."

So Clancy and Briggs grabbed Jack by the legs and pushed him into the pile of straw, his head coming to a rest within less than an inch of Bertha's foot.

"Now he's safe enough I'll swear," chuckled Clancy.

"Good enough," replied Jackson. "Let's be off."

The four men passed out of the door, and the girl heard their feet trampling on the path which led to the road.

She did not make a move until utter silence reigned once more about the shanty, then she stepped out from behind the straw and ran to the door.

Looking toward the road she saw no signs of the men.

"They are gone," she breathed. "Thank heaven for that. Now to release Jack—dear Jack, how I do love him. I'd be willing to suffer anything for his sake. I wonder if he cares as much for me?"

She ran lightly back to the pile of straw and began tearing it away with a feverish energy that soon accomplished her purpose.

In a moment or two she had the boy's face exposed.

She could barely see the outline of his countenance in the dark as she bent down over him, and she felt for the gag across his mouth.

"It is I, Jack, Bertha Garland," she talked to him in a rapid, almost hysterical whisper, so excited was she at the moment. "I'm going to save you, Jack. I'm going to get you loose somehow right away."

"Bertha, is it really you?" asked Jack, in great astonish-

ment, as soon as she had removed the handkerchief from across his mouth.

"Yes, yes," she replied. "Oh, these ropes are tied so tightly. What shall I do to get them loose?"

"Put your hand in my right trouser's pocket and you will find my jackknife," replied Jack, eagerly.

She did as he directed, and was soon saving the rope that held his arms.

Snap went the strands and Jack's arms were free.

"Now you can cut the rest yourself better than I can," she said in a glad tone.

It didn't take the boy a minute to completely free himself.

"Now, Bertha, tell me how you knew I was a prisoner in here?" he asked her.

"I knew it because I was hiding in this shanty when David Jobkins and Patrick Clancy brought you here. I could tell by their words and from the sound when they threw you on the floor and bound you. I could not tell whether I would be able to help you or not, for I was in a tremble lest they should find me here. I dare not think what they might have done to me if they had."

"But how came you to be here at all, Bertha?" asked Jack, wonderingly.

"Martha Stebbings brought me word to-night that Mr. Jobkins had sworn to get even with you for reasons I cannot understand unless it is because you stuck to the company. I went over to your house to warn you, and found you had gone to the mill to see the manager. Fearing that Mr. Jobkins would learn of your whereabouts, as it seems he did, and waylay you on your way home, I started for the mill myself. When I got as far as this place, three men, of whom Mr. Jobkins was one, came along behind me, and to escape observation I rushed into this shanty. To my alarm they came here, too."

"What a dear, brave girl you are, Bertha," interrupted Jack, with some enthusiasm. "And to think you dared venture down in this locality in the gloom of a dark night on my account! I shall never be able to thank you enough," he added, stealing his arm around her waist.

"Could I do less for you, Jack, when I knew you were in danger? Didn't you save me from a frightful injury, if not death, a short time ago? Oh, Jack, I could not sit still at home and think of what might happen to you through that man's revengeful disposition."

Jack drew the girl's unresisting form to him and kissed her on the lips.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried in blushing confusion.

"That's the only way I can truly thank you, Bertha," he said with a cheerful laugh. "But go on. You had something more to tell me."

"Jack, we must do something at once to save the mill," she cried.

"Save the mill! What do you mean?" he asked, a bit startled.

"Those men intend to blow up the engine-room to-night."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the boy. "How do you know that?"

"I heard them talking about it before you came up the road. They have some kind of a clock-work bomb that two of them mean to place in the engine-room while the others keep on the lookout for the night watchman."

"Then they left here to carry out that terrible object, did they?" cried Jack, excitedly.

"Yes."

"I have no time to lose, then. They have too much start now for me to head them off. The best I can do is to try and frustrate their design somehow."

"You must take me with you, Jack. I dare not go home alone. I heard one of the men say the bomb was timed to go off in twenty minutes after it was wound up."

"Come then, Bertha. We can cut across lots and save some time. You say that it is the engine-room they propose to wreck?"

"Yes."

"That would be a terrible disaster for the mill. It would put it out of commission for some time to come. We certainly must prevent such a thing if we can."

They had run down the path and crossed the road while speaking.

Then Jack helped the girl to climb the fence, and once over they started at a rapid pace for the mill, a quarter of a mile away.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXPLOSION.

All was quiet in the vicinity of the mill when they reached the block in which it stood.

"You had better stand in the shadow of the office doorway while I climb the fence and get into the mill yard," said Jack to Bertha.

She reluctantly agreed to do this when she saw there was no other course for her to adopt.

"You must be very careful, Jack," she begged of him. "Don't let those men catch you, and look out that the bomb does not explode when you are near it. Remember it is timed for twenty minutes. If the men have already placed it and gone away you have not many minutes to remove it in."

"I will look out, don't you fear, Bertha. I am in no hurry to join the angels yet," with a reassuring laugh.

Then he made for a point in the fence where he thought he could get over, and inside of a minute he was in the yard of the mill.

There wasn't the slightest sign of the four men.

The yard was as silent as a graveyard.

He drew near the engine-room, which was a brick extension to the main building, with great caution, for he did not mean to be taken by surprise if he could help himself.

Suddenly he stumbled over an object in the shadow of the mill.

It was soft, and seemed like a thing of life.

Jack bent down to examine it and found that it was the night watchman bound and gagged.

In a jiffy the boy had his knife out and was cutting the man's bonds.

Then he removed the gag.

"Now, Harper," said Jack, eagerly and earnestly. "What about these men—there were four of them—do you know whether they've left the place yet?"

"The rascals who put me out of business, you mean?" replied the watchman.

"Of course."

"Yes. They left by the gate about five minutes ago. They broke into the engine-room, I think, and were only a short time on the premises. What their object was I cannot guess, as I had a good view of them when they went away, and they did not seem to be taking anything with them."

"I should say not," replied the boy. "They did not come here to steal, but to blow up the engine-room."

"Blow up the engine-room!" gasped the watchman.

"That's right," replied Jack. "But there isn't a minute to be lost if we are to save the place and not get blown up ourselves. Come on. We must find the bomb they left there. It is timed to explode in twenty minutes, and probably more than half of that time has already expired. We must move lively."

Jack, without losing another moment in additional explanation, darted for the engine-room, a few yards away.

The door, which the rascals had forced, stood ajar and the boy pulled it open.

It was dark as pitch within.

How would he be able to find, in the brief interval that remained to him, that infernal machine which the scoundrels had placed somewhere in the room?

He must light the reflector-lamp the first thing.

As he put his hand in his pocket for a match he heard a loud ticking not many feet away.

He thought it was the clock on the wall until he realized that the sound came from the floor.

"That must come from the clockwork inside the bomb," he breathed, excitedly.

He struck the match and advanced toward the spot whence the sound proceeded.

He soon saw a dark box-like object standing under the big steel driving arm of the engine.

The tick-tick sound came from its interior.

Jack's heart almost stopped beating, and the perspiration came out on his forehead as he gazed down at the menacing object.

What if it went off in another moment or two where would he and the engine be?

But the urgency of the situation caused the brave boy to throw off the benumbing sensation that for a moment paralyzed his limbs.

Throwing all thought of his personal safety to the winds he swooped down on the bomb.

Grabbing it in his two hands he started rapidly for the

door, outside of which stood the watchman afraid to enter.

Then he dashed for the fence and with a tremendous effort he threw the bomb as far over the fence as he could.

Hardly had it struck the ground when it exploded with a terrific report on the night air, seeming to split the very heavens with a deafening crash.

The earth seemed to shake and totter under Jack's feet, and a section of the fence was blown in upon him.

He went down in the midst of the debris.

The watchman came running forward as he crawled out from under the splintered timbers.

"Are you hurt?" asked Harper.

"No," replied Jack, after he had spit out a mouthful of dust. "That explosion will alarm the town, but I must telephone the police and the manager just the same. Let me into the office."

The watchman admitted him to the building.

The first thing Jack did was to run and throw up one of the windows opening on the street and look out in order to let Bertha, who had been terribly frightened by the force of the explosion, know that he was safe.

Then he rushed to the telephone and communicated with the police station first, and afterward with Manager Burnside, who said he would come right over.

By the time the police reached the scene Mr. Burnside came up, and Jack gave them a full explanation of the situation, which was corroborated by Bertha Garland.

All hands visited the scene of the explosion.

A big hole had been blown in the street near the walk, and a good bit of the fence had been wrecked.

The watchman attested the fact that Jack had carried the bomb from the engine-room and thrown it over the fence.

The managers and the officers, too, regarded the heroic boy with undisguised admiration.

"You've got a wonderful nerve, Jack Clyde," said Mr. Burnside. "You certainly saved the engine-room and that end of the main building, but my heavens, lad! You took an awful risk! If that infernal machine had exploded in your hands there would not have been enough left of you to make a respectable funeral."

"Well, sir, it was my duty to save the mill if I could," replied Jack, with the modesty of a true hero, "and I am glad that I succeeded."

"Well, you've done the biggest thing that ever happened in this town," replied the manager, "and you may rest assured the company will reward you well for it. I wouldn't have taken the risk you did for a cool million," and the gentleman wiped the perspiration from his forehead, for he realized the gravity of the case.

"Can you furnish us with the identity of the scoundrels at the bottom of this outrage?" asked one of the officers.

"I can," replied Jack. "They are men who worked for some time in the mill before the recent trouble. The ring-leader is David Jobkins. The others are Patrick Clancy, Jim Briggs, and Peter Jackson. If you get a hustle on you

may be able to catch them, but I fancy they'll get out of town as soon as they can."

People attracted by the explosion began to congregate in the neighborhood by this time.

Nobody could guess the true cause of the fearful sound which had disturbed and frightened many of the inhabitants.

The general impression at first prevailed that the boiler at the mill had blown up.

Jack escorted Bertha to her home and then continued on to his own, where he had quite an exciting story to tell his aunt and Gertie.

They were both horrified at the narrow escape Jack had had for his life.

The Northbridge Times had a sensational story about the explosion in next morning's paper, and gave Jack Clyde full credit for the part he played in the affair.

People all over town praised the boy's courage, and wondered at his nerve.

The president of the company came to the mill next day, and personally shook the mill boy by the hand and commended him in no uncertain terms.

The police did not succeed in catching Jobkins and his accomplices anywhere in town, and it was concluded that they had made tracks for Boston.

On Friday there was a meeting of the directors of the mill company, when resolutions praising Jack were passed unanimously, and the sum of five thousand dollars was voted him as an evidence of the company's appreciation for his signal services.

CHAPTER XII.

JACK PUTS THROUGH ANOTHER REAL ESTATE DEAL.

Flora Watson was grievously disappointed because of David Jobkin's failure to do up Jack Clyde according to their prearranged programme.

She was further angered by the knowledge that Jack had been installed in the position formerly held by Morris Dean.

Then on top of it all was the reflection that the boy she hated had been presented with two rewards aggregating six thousand dollars by the company, and that Bertha Garland had retained her position at the mill, while she (Flora) had sacrificed hers.

She had no sympathy for the ex-foreman, now a fugitive from justice, but she did grieve in secret over the fate that faced Dean, about to be tried for the attempted robbery of the office safe.

She had hoped Jobkins would be successful in putting Jack out of the way so he would not be able to appear at the trial to testify against the ex-clerk, and now that expectation was shattered.

It seemed as if everything had worked against her, and she was furious at the outlook.

To make matters even worse, Morris Dean, who, as we have already stated, was out on bail while his less fortunate confederate, Nelson Spavinger, languished in jail because nobody who knew him had confidence enough in him to

become responsible for his appearance in court when his trial came on, studiously avoided her after the failure of their joint plans to get the best of Jack Clyde.

In her endeavors to recover lost ground with Dean she discovered that Morris was making fresh attempts to get in with Bertha Garland.

Although there wasn't the slightest chance of his making any headway at all with the beautiful mill girl, Flora Watson, nevertheless, became insanely jealous of Bertha, and began to plot how she might do her some dreadful injury.

"I'd like to spoil her beauty for her, the hussy," gritted the angry girl. "I'd be willing to go to jail to get square with her."

Finally she decided upon the fiendish trick of attacking Bertha.

She bided her time, making guarded inquiries around among her friends and acquaintances, in an effort to discover where she could find her supposed rival of an evening.

Perhaps now that she was in a position to carry out her desperate project her conscience interposed, for she hesitated to put her plans into execution.

She kept gloating over the fact that the means was within her reach to do up Bertha whenever she managed to screw her courage up to the sticking point.

It was about this time that Jack Clyde carried through another speculation.

He was on very friendly terms with a certain young real estate man named Will Leslie, who had only lately established himself in Northbridge.

One evening Leslie met Jack and told him confidentially that the B. & M. Railroad Company was going to build an extension to its freight yards which would take in all the ground as far as the end of the block.

"The company has employed me to buy up the property on the quiet on the best terms I can get it for," remarked Leslie. "It will prove a good thing for me when I send in my bill for commissions."

"I congratulate you on getting such a snap. How came you to connect? There are several old real estate men in town. I should have thought the railroad company would have given one of them the preference."

"Well, you see, I have a little pull, in a way. An uncle of mine is on very friendly terms with one of the directors of the road, and it was through his efforts I was selected to do the business."

"Have you started in to buy yet?" asked Jack.

"Yes. I've got about a quarter of the ground secured, and expect to have options on the balance by the end of the week."

"I suppose you haven't had any difficulty about securing the land at a fair figure, have you?"

"Oh, no. You see not one of the owners is on to the fact that the railroad company is in the market for the land."

"If they were wise to the real situation the company would have to pay more to secure the ground they want."

"That's right, they would. I hope you won't breathe a word I have told you about this thing. It wouldn't be fair," said Leslie, hastily, beginning to realize that he had made a mistake in telling Jack about the matter.

"Oh, I sha'n't say a word about it, Leslie; but I can't help taking advantage of the chance you have placed before me to make a little haul out of it myself."

"How do you mean?" asked the young real estate man anxiously.

"Why I bought the corner plot, 100x100, on the corner of Cambridge Street and Railroad Avenue three weeks ago."

"You bought it?"

"Well, my aunt bought it for me, but I put up the money."

"You're joking, I guess."

"No I am not. The ground is practically mine, for my aunt will take title next week, that is unless the B. & M. Railroad will pay me a handsome bonus for my option," grinned Jack.

Leslie was a good deal taken aback.

"I see I made a mistake in being so confidential with you to-night," he said, regretfully.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jack. "I bought that property to hold for a rise. I got it at a comparatively reasonable figure. In fact it's been in the market some time with no takers. I had sixty-nine hundred dollars in the bank that I was looking around to invest in real estate, and it happened I picked that out and took it. I had no idea the railroad company intended buying up that ground until you told me just now; but even if you had not confided that fact to me I should have held out for a good price any way, as I could well afford to hold that ground for some years yet to come."

"Then I suppose I'll have to dicker with you for it?" said Leslie.

"No. There'll be no dickering about it. You go on and buy the rest of the ground and then come to me with a certified check for five thousand dollars, and you can have the property after my aunt has taken title. Or if you prefer to take the option off my hands as it stands you can have it any day this week for three thousand dollars."

"But I didn't expect to give over three thousand dollars altogether, or thirty-five hundred dollars at the outside," protested Leslie.

"Then I'm doing you a favor in a way?"

"How are you?"

"The more the company has to pay for the property the more commission you will make, won't you?"

"That's true; but I am in honor bound to get the ground at the lowest possible price."

"Of course you are," replied Jack, cheerfully, "and I have given you my bed-rock figure. If the company doesn't care to give it let them build their fence so as to exclude my corner. They don't have to have it to make a yard. But still I think it will pay them to make the deal."

The result of the matter was that the railroad company

agreed to pay Mrs. Frost five thousand dollars for the corner plot, and as Jack had purchased it for twenty-five hundred dollars he made a good thing out of the deal.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FAKE MESSAGE.

In spite of the cloud which hung over Morris Dean, and the practical certainty that he would be convicted when his case came to trial, the young man showed himself about town with considerable bravado.

He could be seen every afternoon and night at the North-bridge Billiard Parlors playing pool with boon companions who had no objection in the least to his society.

Where he got his money from, now that he was not working, was a mystery no one inquired into.

The general impression had been at first that his father, to avoid the disgrace of his son's conviction, would encourage him to jump his bail; but so far there was no signs of Morris taking such advantage of his liberty.

Morris, however, didn't intend to be tried if he could help it; but he didn't care to skip out until he had revenged himself on Jack Clyde.

He had had great hopes that David Jobkins, spurred on by Flora Watson, would do the trick.

When his hopes in that direction were frustrated, he put his mind down to accomplishing his revenge himself.

He found, however, that he had a large contract on his hands, for no reasonable opportunity presented itself for him to get in his work.

He would not give up though the date set for his trial was drawing alarmingly near, and his father and brother begged him to make himself scarce before it would be too late for him to get away in safety.

Twice his father gave him money under the impression that he would use it to fly to parts unknown, but each time he changed his mind at the last moment.

After turning down several schemes he had formed against Jack Clyde because of some obstacle that turned up to interfere with his carrying them out, he finally decided to reach Jack through Bertha Garland.

He was satisfied from his observations that Jack and Bertha were as good as an engaged couple, and he felt sure anything that hurt Bertha would break up Jack.

Besides he was stuck on the girl himself, and he thought he saw a way to kill two birds with one stone.

He never dreamed that Flora Watson had designs against Bertha herself, nor that the jealous girl was watching his every move like a hawk.

So he formulated a plan that he thought might be successful.

He found that Jack was often at the mill office for an hour or two of an evening, attending to the work of one of the clerks who was ill.

The evenings were now warm and generally bright, as it was in the latter part of June, and so Bertha frequently walked from her home to the mill to meet Jack and enjoy the return walk with him.

Morris knew this, too.

So one night while Jack was working at his desk, and thinking it was pretty nearly time for Bertha to show up, a boy came to the door with a message which he said he brought from Mrs. Frost stating that Gertie had been taken alarmingly ill and that he must come home directly.

"What's the matter with my sister?" asked Jack anxiously.

"I don't know," answered the boy, in a shifty way, "but you must go home without losing a moment."

Jack was greatly alarmed and disturbed.

He loved his crippled sister dearly, and to have anything happen to her he felt would break his heart.

He must go home at once of course; but what about Bertha?

It might be fifteen or twenty minutes yet before she reached the mill.

He would walk part of the way toward her house and try to head her off, but to provide against his failure to meet her he gave the boy a quarter to wait an hour for her, and if she came to go home with her.

He started off at a rapid walk after locking up the office, but did not see the girl anywhere along the road.

Then he turned off toward his own cottage.

He arrived home in a state of nervous excitement, almost dreading to enter the house.

When he dashed into the little sitting-room, there, to his great surprise, sat his aunt calmly sewing and his sister reading a book on the lounge.

"Why, Jack, what is the matter?" exclaimed Aunt Sue, regarding his flushed and troubled face with no little anxiety, while Gertie uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"Matter!" cried Jack, hoarsely. "Isn't Gertie ill?"

"Ill! The idea! What put that into your head? She doesn't look sick, does she?"

"No, she doesn't, that's a fact," replied the boy drawing a deep breath of relief as he sank into a chair and wiped his heated forehead with his handkerchief.

"Then what made you think she was ill?"

"Because I just got a message from you that she was dangerously sick, and that I must come home at once."

"You got such a message from me!" cried Mrs. Frost, in astonishment.

"Yes, a boy brought it to the mill office not half an hour ago."

"Well, it's very funny. I did not send such a preposterous message as that to you. Why should I?"

"Then I don't understand what it all means," replied Jack, with a perplexed air.

"Who was the boy?"

"I don't know him. I never saw him before."

"And he said I sent him with such a message to you?"

"He did. It broke me all up, for I couldn't bear to think of anything serious happening to Gertie," and he cast a fond look at his crippled sister. "So I came home right away without even waiting for Bertha, whom I expected

to call at the mill, as she usually does when I stop there after dark."

"Poor Jack!" cried his sister reaching out and stroking her brother's hand tenderly, for there was no one in the world like Jack in her opinion.

Aunt Sue was very much puzzled over the situation.

She couldn't see what object any boy had in carrying such a falsehood to Jack.

Suddenly the boy started to his feet.

"Somebody put up a job on me, sure as you live," he said. "Who ever it was wanted to get me away from the mill. Now why should anybody want to get me away from the building? It must be there has been some new plot hatched against the company, though the strike is over and done with two weeks ago. I must return at once and see what's in the wind."

"Look out, Jack, that you do not run into some danger," warned his aunt.

"Yes, do be careful, brother," put in Gertie, anxiously.

"Oh, don't worry yourselves about me. I can take care of myself every time," replied the courageous boy, stoutly.

"I know you're strong and brave, Jack," continued Aunt Sue, "but you must be on your guard that some one does not strike you a foul blow in the dark."

"I'll look out for that, too. I'll run around to Bertha's first and see whether she has got home yet."

With those words Jack clapped his hat on again, and started for the Garland cottage, about a third of a mile distant, and away from the mill.

Mrs. Garland came to the door.

"Is Bertha home?" he asked, eagerly.

"Why no," replied Mrs. Garland, "she went to the mill to meet you. Haven't you seen her?"

"No. I was called home on a hurry message that proved to be false. When did Bertha leave for the mill?"

"About an hour ago."

"Then she should be home by this time," replied Jack, in some excitement. "I gave the boy who brought me the bogus message a quarter to wait for Bertha and come home with her. Maybe he didn't stop at all. I must hurry to the mill and see where she can be. I may meet her on the road. At any rate, I ought to."

Jack, not a little worried over the situation, and anxious for Bertha's safety, started hurriedly up the road for the cotton mill.

CHAPTER XIV.

BERTHA GARLAND AT BAY.

No sooner had Jack departed from the mill office than the form of a young man stepped out into the road from behind a board fence opposite.

He had the face and figure of Morris Dean.

"You're all right, Pixy," he said, clapping the boy on the shoulder. "You managed that fine. Now I'm going into the office," and he took a small jimmy from his pocket and walked up to the door.

"Oh, I say, you're not going to break into the safe again, are you?" asked the boy, nervously.

"No, of course not."

"Then, what's yer game?"

"Never you mind, Pixy. You do what I tell you and no harm will come to you. I'm going to light up just as if Jack Clyde was still here. When that Bertha Garland comes along, just tell her Jack is doing something on the first floor of the mill, and that he said she was to come in there, see?"

"I see," replied the boy, with a grin. "How about the watchman?"

"I fixed him an hour ago."

"What did you do to him?"

"When I got in the yard I hunted up his supper pail, and there I found, as I expected, his bottle of cold coffee. I dosed it good and strong. He always takes a drink of it every hour, and I waited around till he came up and took a drink. It knocked him silly in about one minute. He wouldn't wake up now if the mill fell in on top of him."

The boy smiled all over his freckled face.

By this time Morris Dean had effected an entrance into the office and had relighted the lamps.

"Now, Pixy, as soon as the girl goes through that door into the mill itself, just you lock it. You see the key is in the lock. Then turn out all the lamps and skiddoo. Your work will be over."

"All right. Where's me money you promised?"

"There you are," and Morris handed him a bill, which the boy looked at eagerly and then stowed away in his pocket.

Morris would not have been particularly elated to have known that while he was lighting the lamps and talking to the boy, a pair of snapping black eyes were watching his movements from behind the board fence he himself had but shortly before vacated.

They were the jealous eyes of Flora Watson, who had got into the habit of late of following Morris wherever he went, because she suspected he was trying to meet Bertha Garland.

"Now," said Morris to Pixy, "go out in the road and wait. As soon as you see Bertha Garland coming, whistle, so I'll have time to hide myself in the mill."

"All right," grinned the boy, going outside.

In about five minutes Bertha came tripping down the road.

Pixy saw her and gave the whistle agreed on.

Flora Watson saw her, too, and her thin red lips closed tightly while her eyes flashed fire.

"So," she hissed, vindictively, "that hussy has actually come to the mill to meet Morris, has she? I'll fix her! She shall never have him. Never! Never! Never!"

The furious girl stamped her foot on the ground and glared balefully at the little beauty whom she supposed to be her successful rival, but who, all unconscious of her danger, was walking into the snare spread for her by Morris Dean.

"You're Bertha Garland, aren't you?" asked Pixy, when she came up.

"Yes," she answered, in some surprise at his greeting.

"Jack Clyde told me to watch for you out here, and when you came along I was to tell you he's in the mill, on the first floor, doin' somethin', and that he wants you to come in there."

"Thank you," replied the unsuspecting girl, walking into the office.

"Go right through that door," said Pixy, pointing.

"Yes, I know the way," she answered, with a smile.

As soon as she passed through Pixy whistled again, closed the door and softly locked it.

Then he proceeded to put out the lamps.

As soon as the office was dark he stepped out into the road, closed the door behind him, and started for the town proper.

Hardly had he disappeared than Flora Watson darted across the road, tried the door, and finding that it was not locked, entered the office.

She listened intently.

"They must be in the mill," she muttered, feeling her way toward the door which Pixy had locked.

She found it fast, of course, but she felt the key in the lock and she quietly turned it and let herself into the entry between the office and the mill.

In the meantime Bertha Garland passed across the entry and into the first floor of the mill.

There was a room on one side where packets of cotton were temporarily stored.

A light shone through the partly open doorway.

As the rest of the mill was dark she surmised that Jack was in this room.

She crossed quickly to the door and entered.

One of the standard oil lamps stood on a small table, but there was no one in the room.

"Jack," she said, "where are you?"

"Here I am," replied a voice not at all like Jack's.

She turned around in surprise, and there, framed in the doorway, stood the last person she expected to see—Morris Dean.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" he asked, with a slight grin, pulling the door to and turning the key in the lock.

"What are you doing here?" she inquired as soon as her surprise would permit her to speak.

"What am I doing here? Oh, I came here to see you," he replied.

"To see me?" she cried, wonderingly.

"Yes. I am going to leave town right away, for," with a wicked laugh, "it isn't healthy for me to stay in North-bridge much longer."

"I have nothing to do with your going or staying, Morris Dean," she replied, impatiently. "I came here to see Jack Clyde. Where is he?"

"He is not in the building," laughed Morris, maliciously.

"Not—in—the—building!" gasped Bertha. "Why, that boy said——"

"He said what I told him to say—that Jack Clyde was in here, but he isn't. That was only a ruse on my part to get you in here where I could talk to you alone."

"Talk to me alone! What do you mean?" she cried, a shadow of fear for the first time crossing her thoughts.

She realized that she was alone with him in that great building, in the room, shut away in the very heart of the mill, where not even a sound could possibly reach the outside.

"I mean that I have seized the first chance I have ever got to tell you that I love you. I am going to leave North-bridge to-night, and I want you to go with me."

"Are you mad, Morris Dean?" exclaimed the girl, desperately.

"Not that I'm aware of," he replied, coolly. "I want you to understand that you are in my power. I knew you were coming here to-night to meet Jack Clyde. I determined that you should not—that I would meet you instead. I sent a fake message to Jack, while he was in the office, by that boy you spoke to outside. I said his crippled sister was desperately ill. I knew that would fetch him. It did for he started hot foot for his home. That put the game in my hands, see?"

"You coward!" cried the mill girl, in contemptuous anger.

He started as if stung, then he laughed harshly.

"It doesn't matter what I am. I love you and I'm going to have you go with me to-night, by fair means or foul. Understand me? Now will you go voluntarily?"

"No!" she answered, as sharp as a pistol shot.

"Then I shall make you," he said, rushing forward to seize her in his arms.

For a moment Bertha was panic-stricken, but the next her eyes fell on a bar of steel standing against the wall.

She snatched it up and held it aloft, threateningly.

"Stand back!" she cried. "If you dare come a foot nearer to me I'll kill you!"

She faced him defiantly, with panting breast and flashing eye, like a hunted animal at bay.

It was evident she was full of fight from her feet up.

CHAPTER XV

NEMESIS.

Morris Dean quailed before the dangerous light which flashed from the girl's eyes, and for a moment he hesitated.

Then he darted forward, and, with a quick, cunning movement, wrested the bar from Bertha's hand and tossed it to the other end of the room.

"Now," he said, triumphantly, "what can you do?"

She made no reply, but drawing back faced him as dauntlessly as ever.

"You're a spunky little thing, aren't you?" he said, sneeringly. "But it won't do you any good. I am boss of this ranch now, and you've got to knuckle to me. You have got to go away with me to-night, whether you like it or not."

"I don't see how you're going to make me do it," she replied, scornfully.

"Don't you? Look here."

He drew from an inside pocket a small bottle and a handkerchief.

"This is chloroform. A few drops on this handkerchief pressed against your mouth and nostrils will quiet you for hours. When you wake up you'll be miles from Northbridge."

A shudder of horror went through Bertha's body.

Was there no way of escape for her?

She ran her eye quickly but stealthily over the door behind Morris—the only exit from the room.

She remembered now he had locked it on entering, but the key was in the lock.

If she could only reach that door a moment ahead of him—but how could she do it?

He himself removed part of the difficulty.

He stepped to the table where the lamp stood, removed the cork from the bottle and coolly proceeded to wet the handkerchief with the chloroform.

The crisis was at hand.

She must do something now if ever.

Suddenly a plan, fully formed, rushed into her mind.

Close behind her were several packets of cotton and near it a large bundle of waste.

She seized two large handfuls of the waste, and, darting behind the table, heaped them on the lamp, which lighted the room, thus shattering the globe and extinguishing the light.

Morris was taken completely by surprise.

While he stood irresolutely by the table she grabbed a couple of packets of cotton and threw them against the further wall, so as to make Morris think she had run there to hide.

The ruse was successful.

"You little vixen!" he cried, "you shan't escape me that way."

He rushed at the spot he supposed she was crouching in.

She took instant advantage of this move on his part to dash for the door.

Morris saw at the same moment that he had been deceived and he started after her.

She turned the key and flung the door wide open.

Just as she was rushing out of the room she felt his arm on her shoulder.

But she managed to elude him and fled down the long room filled with spinning machines.

He tripped over something and measured his length on the floor.

With a slight exclamation of pain he picked himself up and was after her.

Bertha aimed to reach one of the windows at the extreme end of the room which overlooked the yard.

She intended to throw up the sash and scream for the watchman, not dreaming that the man was lying senseless in a shed near by.

It was a brilliant night, and the rays of the full moon flooded through the many windows of the place, bathing the whole in a gleaming white light.

But this light made her flying figure perfectly clear to Morris, and enabled him to avoid contact with the machinery that might otherwise have confused him.

And while this mad race was in progress, another figure, that of Flora Watson, who had been crouching and listening at the door of the small room during that momentous interview between Bertha and Morris, followed them quickly by another path close to one of the walls.

All the tiger in her nature was now aroused.

Her eyes had at last been opened to the fact that Bertha Garland did not care the least bit for Morris Dean—that she was doing her best to escape from his undesirable attentions—and the jealousy she had so long felt against the girl dropped away from her like a garment cast aside.

In place of it was substituted a feeling of ungovernable rage against Morris Dean.

He had promised to take her with him when he left Northbridge, and now here he was trying to carry away another in her place.

The love she had felt for him seemed suddenly turned to bitter hate, and her outraged soul cried aloud for revenge.

As she followed the young man and the girl he was fast overtaking, she clutched in her right hand a bottle which she had snatched from a shelf in the dark factory.

"You cannot escape me!" cried Morris, reaching forward and seizing Bertha by the arm before she could gain the coveted window.

The girl uttered a piercing scream that echoed through the big room like the wail of a lost soul.

"Scream as much as you want, you little vixen, there's no one to hear you," said Morris, gleefully. "I've got you now and you shall not again escape me."

But there was lots of fight left in Bertha yet.

She was strong, too, and lithe as a panther for her age.

She struck Morris full in the face with her fists, and he staggered back with a snarl of anger, only to recover in a moment and come for her again.

Bertha tried to escape him by dodging around a machine.

As she was light on her feet, she might have succeeded but she tripped in her haste and fell to the floor.

Before she could rise he had his hand on her arm.

Then he seized her head, bent it back and taking the handkerchief saturated with chloroform from his pocket he tried to press it over her mouth and nostrils.

Bertha, recognizing its pungent aroma, fought desperately to keep his hand away.

Standing over her, however, he had every advantage of the situation.

"Do you mean to murder me?" wailed the girl.

"No. I only want to quiet you, that's all," he replied, grimly.

"Have you no mercy, Morris Dean?"

"Not an ounce. You must go away with me to Boston to-night. I think more of you in one minute than any other girl in Northbridge in a year. Do you know that?"

Then came the sound of light feet moving rapidly across the room.

A tall, lithe, girlish form sprang toward the struggling pair.

"You villain! You lying, perjured villain!" screamed Flora Watson, passionately. "Is this your love for me? Take that!"

She raised her hand and dashed the bottle at Morris Dean's face.

It broke on his cheek and scattered its contents over his countenance.

He uttered a terrible cry, released Bertha and staggered back, tripping over the same obstacle which had downed the girl, and lay squirming in agony on the floor.

"Help! Help!" he shrieked. "I am burning alive! Help for heaven's sake!"

Bertha got on her feet, but so bewildered was she by the appearance of Flora Watson, whom she recognized, as well as by the agonizing cries of the prostrate Morris, that instead of fleeing she remained rooted to the spot.

"It serves him right," said Flora, coldly. "He deceived me, played with me, and I have revenged myself upon him."

"Great heavens, Flora!" exclaimed the frightened Bertha. "What have you done to him?"

The girl laughed an unpleasant, sardonical laugh.

"I haven't killed him, don't fear. He has only got what I meant for you."

"Meant for me?" gasped Bertha.

"Yes," cried Flora, fiercely, grasping her by the wrist. "For you, had you cared for him as I thought you did. I'd have spoiled your pretty face for you. I'd have made you so hideous that even Jack Clyde would have given you up. But I learned the truth in time. You have nothing now to fear from me—neither has Jack. Come, let us go from here."

"And leave him that way?" replied the sympathetic Bertha.

"Why not? What do you care? Was he not about to drug you a moment ago? Didn't I save you from that? An hour ago he was all the world to me," her voice broke in a dry sob; "but now," fiercely, "the dream is shattered and I hate him!"

She turned away, drawing Bertha with her.

At that moment the rapid tread of a manly foot was heard on the floor and in another moment Jack Clyde confronted the two girls.

CHAPTER XVI.

RISE IN THE WORLD.

"Bertha!" exclaimed Jack. "How came you in the mill?"

He flashed a suspicious glance at Flora, for he knew the girls were not friends.

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" cried Bertha, running to him and

sobbing on his shoulder. "I've—I've had such a narrow escape."

"From what, Bertha?" he asked, putting his arm about her, reassuringly.

"From Morris Dean."

"Morris Dean!" ejaculated the boy, looking around. "Where is he?"

"Behind that machine," she pointed, shudderingly.

Jack now noticed the plaintive cries of the young ex-clerk, and he walked to the spot where he lay and looked down at him in astonishment.

"What is the matter with him? He seems to be in great pain."

"Ask Flora," returned Bertha. "She knows best."

"Well," said Jack, turning on the handsome brunette, "what is the matter with him?"

"I injured him," she answered, doggedly. "I flung a bottle and it hit him."

"Injured him!" exclaimed Jack, somewhat puzzled.

"Yes. I threw a bottle which I just picked from a shelf in the dark."

"Great Scott! You never did that!" cried Jack, aghast.

"I did, and I'm glad of it. I'm ready to go to jail, but I have had the satisfaction of getting square with him."

"What did he do to you?"

"No matter what he did," replied Flora, bluntly. "He did enough to deserve all he got. He deceived me into believing that he cared for me—that's what he did if you want to know."

Jack knelt over the suffering youth.

He saw he could do nothing to relieve Dean's pain.

The only thing he could do was to lift him in his arms and drag him out into the office, where he telephoned for a physician, explaining what had happened to Morris Dean, and begging him to hasten to the mill office to relieve his agony.

While waiting for the doctor to come, Jack listened to Bertha's recital of what she had gone through from the moment she had fallen into the trap set for her by Morris.

As for Flora, she walked away from the place, calm and defiant, and Jack made no effort to detain her.

The physician brought remedies with him that partially eased Dean's sufferings.

The bottle had contained an acid, which burnt the boy's skin.

He and Jack, accompanied by Bertha, then assisted Morris to his home.

"I feel sorry for him," said Jack, as he and Bertha walked home in the moonlight, "but still if it hadn't been for Flora's action he would probably have succeeded in drugging you before I reached the mill, though I don't see how he expected to carry you away."

This part of Dean's scheme was explained next morning when a horse and buggy was found standing a short distance from the mill.

A stable keeper recognized the rig as one he had rented to Morris Dean.

Jack and Bertha expected that Flora Watson would be arrested next day.

Nothing of the kind occurred, as Morris refused to explain how he had come by the burns, except that he intimated it was an accident. In fact, Flora did not know what was in the bottle.

His face was badly disfigured.

This misfortune prevented him from making his escape from the trial, which came on a week afterward.

Considerable pressure was brought to bear on Jack, especially to induce him to make his evidence against Morris as favorable to that youth as possible.

He consented to this, and in pursuance thereof when he went on the stand he put strong stress on the interview between Morris and Nelson Spavinger he had overheard in the old shanty on the Northbridge road that rainy night.

He showed that the sport had clearly victimized the ex-clerk, and then hounded him into doing some desperate act to save the knowledge of his foolishness reaching his father's ears.

Morris, in his own defence, corroborated Jack's words, and swore he was in the act of closing the safe after taking the single package of \$100, when the mill boy trapped him.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty, coupled with a recommendation to the mercy of the Court.

The prosecutor, in view of the facts that had been brought out during the trial, and out of consideration for the prisoner's youthfulness, and his respectable connections, put a plea before the judge in his favor.

The result was that the judge, after several days' delay, suspended sentence, and Morris was allowed to go free.

The penalty hung over his head, however, like the Sword of Damocles in the fable, as a warning to him for the future, for should he ever be convicted of another serious charge it would go especially hard with him, as the suspended sentence would, in that case, become operative, in addition to the second punishment.

Nelson Spavinger was tried for his connection with the affair, was convicted by Morris Dean's testimony, and was sentenced for one year in prison.

Shortly after Dean's trial, Bertha Garland had an interview with Manager Burnside, and succeeded in getting Flora Watson back in the mill, for which favor Flora expressed her gratitude to Bertha, and ever after maintained a friendly attitude toward her.

A few weeks later David Jobkins and Peter Jackson were arrested in Chicago on the ordinary charge of "drunk and disorderly."

At the most their sentence was ten days in the city jail.

Unfortunately for them, however, they were identified in court by a visitor from Northbridge who had come west on business.

He notified the police authorities that the men were wanted in Northbridge on a very serious charge, and he also telegraphed the facts to the town police.

Extradition papers were secured and two officers were

sent to Chicago to bring them East as soon as their ten days' detention had expired.

They were dutifully tried, convicted on the evidence given by Bertha and Jack Clyde, and sentenced to a ten-year term in the penitentiary.

On the first of the year Jack, having given such evidence of proficiency in his minor clerkship, was promoted to a higher position in the office.

He was in high feather, as the saying is, with the company and management, and his future seemed to be assured.

During the spring of the following year he purchased, through his aunt, a new business building on Main Street, on which he paid \$9,000 cash and gave a mortgage for \$7,000.

The property was easily worth \$20,000, but Jack got it at a fair bargain because of business reverses to the owner.

Two years afterward, just before he married Bertha Garland, he sold the property for \$25,000, making a clear profit on it of \$9,000, besides a certain profit on his rentals.

At any rate, when Jack was married his capital had increased to nearly \$30,000, all but the \$6,000 he had received from the mill company having been accumulated through clever real estate deals.

He had also been advanced to the post of cashier in the mill office.

Of course, after her marriage, Bertha did not work in the mill any more.

She became the proud mistress of a brand new house that Jack built for her.

At her husband's desire, Aunt Sue and his sister Gertie came to live with them, and no family jars ever disturbed the happiness of the Clyde home.

Soon after little Jack, Jr., was born to complete the joy of the young couple, Mr. Burnside resigned his position as manager of the mill.

At a special meeting of the directors of the company, Jack, much to his surprise, was offered the post with an expression of confidence in his ability to fill it.

Of course he accepted it, for he knew he was quite capable of running the mill as it ought to be run.

His wife and his friends, too, were proud of his success, for had not he in a few years risen FROM FACTORY BOY TO MANAGER?

THE END.

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